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The Music Story Series

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THE STORY OF ORATORIO

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St Cecilia

after the painting by Raphael
in the Academy of Bologna

The Story of Oratorio

BY

ANNIE W. PATTERSON
Mus. Doc., B.A., Royal University of Ireland

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Preface.

OST musical matters have been dealt with fully, from critical and a technical point of view, by the erudite eorist and historian. But to the casual student, most nateurs, and the large public of "listeners to music," e great art-forms, such as Oratorio, Opera, and Symony, convey, at best, a very indefinite and shadowy eaning. Ask the average "musical man" what is an atorio, and he will tell you :—"Oh, the *Messiah* is an atorio. It is a great work, you know—for chorus, nd, and big singers—and we hear it at least once a ar—generally about Christmas time." The definition good in its way, but it scarcely brings us further than e title-page of Oratorio. What vast wealth there beyond!

To explore the mine of musical treasure, even in one rection, would require more time, patience, and earnest search than the great army of "listeners" could well vote to the task. We live in an age of rush and rry, when mental digestion is taxed to its utmost to similate all its pabulum. The lighter and pleasanter the intellectual palate be its nourishment, the more

readily will it be swallowed and absorbed by the orga
of interest, reason, and memory. All cannot appreci
a sermon or a learned lecture, but few fail to enj
a *story*. Hence the narrator, plain and simple, is t
most popular of educators. He has ever been a favour
since the world began: witness the immortality of t
sagas of bards and poets of all ages, and the va
growth of the literature of fiction with the onwa
march of civilisation. As children, we loved fairy tal
and there are few whom, at any period of their liv
the well-written novel fails to fascinate or amuse.
many the story of their own lives—their birth, pare
age, adolescence, prime, middle age, and declini
years—seems a truth stranger than fiction. To
musical reader let us hope the following Story
Oratorio—traced from its first dawn in the music
religious devotion to its climax in the masterpieces
Handel and Mendelssohn—may be read with tolera
and some enjoyment, allowance being made for the f
that much in the narrative has been condensed
omitted, and that technicalities and "dry" statist
are touched upon as lightly as possible, save in
last two chapters, which are specially written
musical students (professional and amateur). It
been said that "a good story tells itself." He
the story-teller hopes to hide her own defects as

narrator behind the intrinsic excellence of the tale which she has endeavoured to tell; for, of all musical forms, Oratorio is unquestionably the noblest and most ennobling. But more of this hereafter.

In telling a connected narrative that should be both inclusive of all important landmarks in the career of Oratorio, and yet exclusive of unnecessary detail and parenthetical information, the writer has had to face the fact that, with the exception of the admirable article on "Oratorio" by Mr. W. S. Rockstro, in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* to which she expresses her indebtedness, and the chapters devoted to the Oratorio and its progress in the various histories of music which she has consulted, the subject has not been connectedly dealt with before *in English*—it being remembered that many critical articles exist on the topic in German, as also such works as C. H. Bitter's *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Oratoriums*, and Otto Wangemann's *Geschichte des Oratoriums.* As all of these treat the matter from a historical and critical aspect, it was necessary to go much farther afield in the matter of preliminary research and explore many by-paths of musical narrative, in order to invest the story with all that might in any way add to its general, without disturbing its peculiar, interest. The great oratorios themselves have also been care-

fully studied and analysed by the writer, and the results of the survey placed, as briefly and simply as possible, before the reader. Space limitations, and the necessity of being entertaining rather than abstruse, have necessitated the curtailing of all criticisms and descriptions; and, in all cases, suggestions and lines of thought are rather intimated than dogmas laid down, or novel and personal opinions ventilated. A special difficulty had to be contended with in the fact that the term Oratorio is, in latter days, a very pliable one; as often as not composers calling their oratorios "Sacred Cantatas," and *vice versa*. In endeavouring to stick to her subject-matter, the writer scarcely hopes to have steered quite clear of rocks of offence, and is prepared to be informed that she has omitted the mention of many important oratorios of the past and present. While quite open to correction on this point, and aware that her research, though as thorough as possible, had of necessity its limitations, the authoress would, however, plead that, throughout, only those works have been classed under the term *Oratorio*, the text of which was drawn from biblical narrative or episode,[1] told in more or less of a dramatic sequence of events. Under this heading come the *Messiah*,

[1] Schumann's profane oratorio, *Paradise and the Peri*, may be classed as unique. See pp. 102–128.

Creation, St. Paul, Elijah, and *Redemption;* but we do not include in the same category many famous masses, the *Lobgesang* of Mendelssohn, and the *Deutsches Requiem* of Brahms.

Lastly, the impossibility—within the compass of a small and "popular" type of volume like the present—of touching upon more than the fringe of a great and noble theme, will be apparent to the intelligent reader without further apology. Every effort has been made to render the Appendices and Indices as complete and accurate as possible, with a view to aid the student; and it is to be particularly hoped that singers of sacred music, as conductors of oratorio societies, may find these useful in case of reference. Appended will also be found a list of the chief sources of information consulted in the compiling of the events of the "Story," though this does not include much desultory reading of a general nature which bore directly or indirectly upon the growth and development of the sacred *dramma per musica.* The reader, who has a mind to investigate the subject thoroughly, cannot do better than consult for himself the lives of the great Master Musicians who have distinguished themselves as oratorio composers; after which a careful examination of their chief works, followed by a good *hearing* of the same, will be found of infinite service and value.

If the few life-details and work-descriptions of the great creative musical artists and their noblest outputs chronicled herein inspire to further and deeper inquiry in the same directions, the *Story of Oratorio* will not have been penned in vain.

ANNIE W. PATTERSON.

LONDON, *November* 1902.

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Story of Oratorio.

CHAPTER I.

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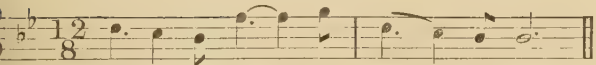


ORATORIO AS IT IS.

oft-repeated experience—The universality of the *Messiah*—Definitions of oratorio—Oratorio and opera—Secular *versus* sacred elements in music—Oratorio and opera "forms"—Oratorio compared to a cathedral—Oratorio the highest musical art-form.

LARGE concert-hall brilliantly lighted. Ladies and ntlemen in evening dress are being bustled into their ts by stewards. The capacious orchestra illed with chorus-singers and instrument- sts. The bright dresses of the *soprani* d *alti* form a broken crescent of brilliant our, surrounded above and intercepted in the centre rows of black-suited male vocalists and the members the band. Aloft, the organ peals forth the pitch

An oft-repeated Experience

note; and as the skilful organist weaves a brilliant succession of harmonies round the *A*, the strings "try if they be in tune,"[1] and the oboe and clarinet play fanciful counterpoints, while the bassoon grunts and grumbles to his heart's content. All is motion, vibration, life—*i.e., animated music;* and, as the "tuning up" swells forth with more and more intensity as the violins get quite in accord, the hubbub of conversation, greeting of friends and acquaintances, and the incessant cry of programme-boys are drowned in the grand tonic chord of the sunny sixth of the normal key. Presently an immense outburst of applause and hand-clapping resounds through the building. Four solo singers of eminence are coming upon the platform and taking their seats in front of the orchestra. They are closely followed by the conductor, who bows solemnly to the audience as he assumes his *bâton* and opens the full score that lies on the desk before him. As he does so, the applause sinks to a murmur, the conversation and bustle in the hall is subdued, the instrumentalists are all attention, and an almost complete silence succeeds the hubbub as the sharp click of the wand of office betokens that the Overture is about to begin. The concert-hall doors are closed, the latest arrivals beating a hasty retreat into the nearest vacant seats; and, for a second or two, all is mute expectation. Thousands of ears are waiting for the opening chord—a chord which resounds in anticipation already in the mental ears of many

[1] Famous Prelude of ancient Gaelic harpers.

ltured musicians present. At last it comes; solemn, and, pathetic, and yet heroic in its strength and bility—the full E minor common chord that ushers the Introduction to the fugal (instrumental) opening ovement of Handel's *Messiah*. How firm and strong e the diatonic harmonies as they succeed each other, d how exhilarating is the briskly moving fugue with s clear, well-defined subject announced by the violins! here is no mistaking Handel in his sublimity and wer, tempered with sweetness. We, who have heard e *Messiah* overture from childhood, wonder how it is e music never palls upon us: it is ever fresh, in- iriting, and strong—strong with a strength that is tle short of divine. All too briefly the majestic close reached. Then, after a scarcely perceptible pause, e solo tenor having risen from his seat, the soothing iterated chords, so tender and restful in their con- lation, that open "Comfort ye," entrance the hearers. ne song of promise, "Every valley shall be exalted," th its flowing florid melodiousness and exquisite cal cadence of glad tranquillity, follows; and then, th full-voiced attack and tone, the choir commence e first of the great *Messiah* choruses, "And the glory the Lord shall be revealed." The solo bass next unders forth the half-menacing, stern, and thrilling xt that speaks of One who is "like a refiner's fire." ne noble chorus, "And He shall purify the sons of vi," follows. To the solo contralto falls the tender, autiful aria—so rich and full of contentment in its cred exultation—"O Thou that tellest good tidings

to Zion." And, ere long, succeeds the great so-called "Christmas" choruses that speak of the Child—the "Wonderful! Counsellor! the Mighty God! the Everlasting Father! the Prince of Peace!" We listen and are moved, even the most apathetic of us. Fashion sinks into insignificance; the things of the world seem but as baubles; even the cares of daily life press less heavily upon us, as once more the Pastoral Symphony, with its naïve tenderness and suavity, speaks of the Sacred Night when shepherds watched their flocks nigh Bethlehem and heard the angelic choirs chant the joyous news of the birth of "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," on that first glad Christmas morn. And thus Handel's masterpiece—the, as yet, undeposed King of Oratorios—proceeds. The solo soprano sings a florid song of jubilation, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion"; the contralto appeals to many hearts in "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd"; while tears rise to the eyes of many when the exhortation falls upon their hearing: "Come unto Him, all ye that labour; come unto Him, ye that are heavy laden, and He will give you rest." As we listen to this beautiful number, we realise how tenderly restful are the slow upward and downward progressions of the scale, as Handel has so well demonstrated in his apt setting of the words, "Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Of the numbers, solo and choral, treating of the sufferings, humiliation, death, resurrection, and final

triumph of the "King of Glory," it needs not to speak in detail. The touching chorus, "Behold the Lamb of God"; the tear-compelling recitative and arioso, "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart," and "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow"; the ever fresh and lovely soprano solo, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"; as also the mighty "Hallelujah," "Worthy is the Lamb," and "Amen" choruses—these are too well known to music-lovers to need comment. The whole work, based on some of the noblest portions of Sacred Writ, occupies a full and exalting evening's performance, and constitutes what is known as an *Oratorio*—the greatest oratorio undoubtedly ever penned. Through the music of the *Messiah* many, by circumstances or disinclination unfamiliar with the Gospel of Christ, have felt their hearts burn within them as the divine words of the scriptural text, wedded to Handel's sublime music, have fallen upon their ears. To the languid, the indifferent, and the sad, how often have the glad tidings of "Peace on earth, goodwill to men" come like balm in Gilead! Nor have sects, caste, or class aught to cavil at in this superb masterpiece. While it is the musical embodiment of the greatest of truths—Divine Love—it promulgates no specific dogmas nor militates against any particular form of belief. It is a work for all time and for all men—the narrative of the fulfilment of Jewish promise in the message of Christianity. Even for the freethinker and the agnostic

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF THE ORIGINAL SCORE OF THE "MESSIAH."

therein is the triumph of Purity and Truth, the symmetric harmony of the universe, the evolution to perfection and purification of all things good and evil, the glorious consummation of the Faith, Hope, and Love that rules the universe. Were all musical masterpieces, save one, doomed to destruction, perhaps that most salutary for preservation would be Handel's great oratorio, the *Messiah.*[1]

Definitions of Oratorio

The definitions given of Oratorio in most musical text-books may be summarised as follows:—Oratorio Form embodies the same mode of construction as opera—*i.e.*, it is built up of Recitatives and Arias for solo voices (singly and concerted), as also of choral and instrumental numbers. These latter include the Overture, which is usually written in strict classical form. In opera the dramatic and secular element are uppermost; in the oratorio, the text being taken from scriptural or sacred sources, albeit one great event or series of consequent incidents and lines of thought are followed out as consistently as possible, interest is maintained rather by an appeal to the intellectual than the sensual attitude of the mind. Idealism rather than realism is aimed at. Yet the oratorio is not entirely reft of tendencies dramatic and personal. Although Dr. Ritter defines it as "sacred art for art's sake," still he subsequently refers to it as "the highest form of musical dramatic art, in the sense that it possesses as foundation and contents the deepest and loftiest ideas of Christian

[1] First performed in Dublin, April 13th, 1742.

religious-moral life. Its heroes and heroines are the ideal instruments and messengers of divinity. Their struggles, their triumphs, are those of high and noble souls. The strains with which the composer expresses their emotions, their feelings, must thus aim at the freest and most ideal perfection. . . . The chorus, forming one of the most important factors in the oratorio, not seldom concentrates in itself all the rays of the central idea of the composer's sacred, dramatic expression and inspiration. The purely sentimental, the realistic passionate—the reflex of human life in its continual conflicts and struggles, and the necessary basis of opera—do not find such a conspicuous place in the oratorio."[1]

Oratorio and Opera

When contrasting the dramatic and epic powers which respectively distinguish the two greatest of musical art-forms—opera and oratorio—from each other, Mr. W. S. Rockstro writes as follows:—"Dramatic expression," he says, "necessarily presupposes the presence of the Actor, who describes his own emotions in his own words. Epic power is entirely subjective. Its office is, so to act upon the hearer's imagination, as to present to him a series of pictures—whether of natural scenery, of historical events, or even of dramatic scenes enacted out of sight—sufficiently vivid to give him a clear idea of the situation intended to be described. Now, if in 'Deeper and deeper still,' Handel has given us a convincing proof of his power as a dramatist, it is

[1] *History of Music*, by Dr. F. L. Ritter.

equally certain that, in the Flute Symphony to 'Angellati che Cantate' in *Rinaldo*, the Pastoral Symphony in the *Messiah,* and the Dead March in *Saul,* he has shown himself no less successful as a Tone painter. The perfection of these wonderful pictures may be tested by the entire absence of the necessity for scenic accessories to give them their full force. When Mr. Sims Reeves declaims[1] 'Deeper and deeper still' in ordinary evening dress, he speaks as directly to our hearts, and portrays Jephtha's agony of soul quite as truly, as he could possibly do were he dressed in the robes of an Israelitish Judge. . . . The value lies in the Music itself; the only condition needful for its success is that it should be well performed."[2]

Secular *versus* Sacred Elements in Music

Again, in comparing opera with oratorio music, the secular as opposed to the sacred element in music has been the subject of frequent and varied discussion. The literary text is not always responsible for the solemn, exhilarating, pathetic, or enlivening sentiments which music, *per se,* often awakens. The association of certain words, say some, with certain musical phrases, give to those phrases a character sacred or the reverse. Others declare that the speed, or rate, of performance has so much to do with the general character of the music that a dance tune,

[1] The past tense must now be used. Sims Reeves, the great tenor, is no more.

[2] W. S. Rockstro on the "Oratorio" in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

played slowly, may be metamorphised into a hymn tune, and *vice versâ*. The story is even on record of a certain young organist who had a partiality for arranging Wagnerian operatic excerpts and playing them as offertory voluntaries. The music chosen gave no offence until it came to the clergyman's ears that his congregation were regaled on Sunday to music originally written for the stage. The young musician was reprimanded for his want of devotional sense as to what was becoming and appropriate for performance at divine service. Feeling somewhat nettled, the Wagnerian determined to have his revenge. Accordingly, the following Sunday, a staid body of worshippers were not a little amazed to hear, during collection, what sounded very like a lively dance tune. After service the organist was peremptorily summoned to the vestry.

"You will please to understand," said the pastor with severity, "that, if you wish to retain your position as director of the music of this church, we cannot have frivolous or secular organ selections played during service."

"I quite understand that, sir," was the reply, "but forgive me if I deny having transgressed to-day. The voluntary you disapproved of was an improvisation on an old hymn tune, my apology for playing it at a brisk speed being that it was originally so intended to be rendered, as the hymn melody was adapted from a still older dance tune."[1] A somewhat similar "situation"

[1] This is actually the case with "Orientis partibus" (the "Hymn of the Ass"). See Chapter III., p. 44.

is narrated of the organist who, being reproved for playing "lively" voluntaries in church, improvised on a popular music-hall ditty taken at "dirge" pace, and was complimented afterwards upon the solemnity and appropriateness of his selection by those who did not know the source from which it was drawn. But such "tricks" upon the part of musicians are neither legitimate nor in good taste. The speed of performance doubtless affects the character of the music rendered; but "quick" music is by no means always of a frivolous character, witness the energy and earnestness of some of the most rapid and florid of J. S. Bach's organ fugues. Music has been described as "the language of the emotions." Even as our emotions are swayed by human passion or the divine afflatus, so will the music which emanates from a gifted composer's emotional tone-sense, disclose, if we could but diagnose it accurately, the "spirit" in which that music was written. For oratorio work the musician undoubtedly requires "the sincere reverence of a devout mind, accompanied by a keen appreciation of the inner meaning of the text—a thorough understanding of the spirit as well as of the letter."[1] How fully Handel's grand choruses and sublime arias adapt themselves to the biblical words chosen, even the ordinary listener finds no difficulty in realising. With regard to the composition of the "Hallelujah" chorus, the great Saxon is recorded to have said, "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the good God himself."

[1] W. S. Rockstro in the "Oratorio" article, Grove's *Dictionary*.

The very "forms" utilised in oratorio, though similar to those in opera, are of a more solid and perhaps scholarly character than the solo and concerted numbers written for the stage. In chorus work, particularly, we see the difference between these two great art products. The opera chorus is, of its nature, light and fragmentary. Inner parts cannot be too complex, or even the best drilled of chorus-singers, having to memorise these parts, would have to face almost insuperable difficulties. The sentiment of the opera chorus is, indeed, usually of such an evanescent nature — the mere expression of a passing phase of emotion, or the description of a temporary dramatic situation — that counterpoint and canon, still less fugue, would seem strangely laboured and out of place. In the oratorio chorus, on the contrary, the grand embodiment of one mighty thought or precept, or the description of a solemn, strong, or impressive incident, calls for majestic, solid, and erudite treatment; and hence upon the chorus the oratorio composer lavishes, or should lavish, all the wealth and proficiency of his musicianship. Whether in choral or fugue form, the oratorio chorus has, or should have, an artistic value of its own, as a piece of polyphonic writing, which is not looked for in the corresponding operatic choral number. The distinction between opera and oratorio may therefore best be described by noticing that dramatic or emotional sentiment is, in the sacred work, expressed more often *collectively;* whereas, in the secular work,

Oratorio and Opera "Forms"

the thread of the narrative, story, or main idea is generally left to *individual* exposition. The introduction of a chain of choruses—such as we find in Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, for example—finds no parallel in opera. The whole construction of the sacred drama is indeed opposed to personality or individualism, save in an idealised sense. Thus in *Elijah* we see rather the messenger of Divinity than the man; whereas, in a work like *Tannhäuser*, the man and the woman are the centre pivots around which revolve the interest and action of the whole. The treatment of the opera is, in short, lyrical, as contrasted with the choral development of the oratorio.

If, as is generally allowed, chorus work is the highest achievement of the expert composer, the oratorio gives most scope for the display of the greatest musical gifts and erudition. That few have succeeded in investing this superb art-form with lasting interest is attested to by the fact that we possess, compared with other classes of composition, so few really great oratorios. The oratorio has been aptly compared to a cathedral. The fanciful thought seems to have struck many writers, probably independently of each other. Thus we have it from the German philosopher Schelling; the French authoress Mdme. de Stael (in *Corinne*); and, quite recently, that distinguished and successful novelist, Mr. Frankfort Moore, puts the idea in the mouth of one of his characters in *A Nest of Linnets.* Perhaps we may be pardoned for quoting, in this con-

Oratorio compared to a Cathedral

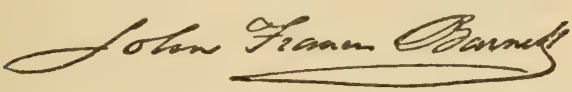
nection, an excerpt from the latter work. Mrs. Abingdon is a charming actress, famed for her skill at repartee. She thus speaks of the composer of the *Messiah:* "Oh, I can only think of Handel as a builder of cathedrals. Every oratorio that he composed seems to me comparable only to a great cathedral, glorious within and without, massive in its structure, and here and there a spire tapering up to heaven itself, and yet with countless columns made beautiful with the finest carving. . . . If the music of *Messiah* were to be frozen before our eyes, would it not stand before us in the form of St. Paul's?"

Oratorio the Highest Musical Art-form

To follow out this pleasing conception, one might perhaps add that the sacred edifice of the oratorio has for its foundation and paving, the orchestra; for its masonry, pillars, and lofty roof, the chorus work; while the "storied windows richly dight,"[1] the marble pulpit, altar and font, represent the solo, or solo-concerted, numbers, each a gem of tone-constructive art, beautiful to the ear as the architectural features named delight and astonish the eye. Just as the cathedral is one of the highest triumphs of the designer's and builder's art, so the oratorio is in the front rank of all that is noble and exalted in the output of the creative musician. As the cathedrals form the "sights worth seeing" of great cities; so the study, as the performances, of oratorios offer opportunities for culture, experience, and widening of musical thought to the student—amateur and profes-

[1] Milton, *Il Penseroso.*

sional musician—which cannot be surpassed. The stability of first-class oratorio music is proved by the wide popularity and general familiarity of all classes of hearers with such works as Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. The multiplication of great works like these is no more looked for than we would for many great cathedrals in our important towns. If anything went to prove the value of the "Book of Books," it would be the fact that the grand music of the best oratorios, being wedded to imperishable words, partakes of that imperishability, and seems never to grow stale or out of date. The *immortality* of foremost oratorio music is that which, to thoughtful minds, makes one realise the infinite possibilities of the Divine Art. Music can charm us at all times with strains exhilarating, joyous, tender, plaintive, pathetic, and

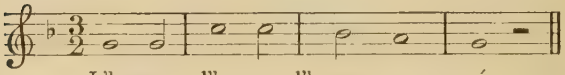


meditative; it can thrill the emotions or soothe angry or frantic passion; best of all, it can raise the soul from earth to heaven, as when, for instance, we listen to that pure and beautiful melody, "I know that my Redeemer liveth,"[1] or that restful sacred song, so replete with comfort for many aching hearts, "O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him; and He shall give thee thine heart's desire."[2]

[1] From Handel's *Messiah*. [2] From Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

CHAPTER II.

Opening phrase of "L'Homme armé" (secular *Canto Firmo* used in early Church Music).



MUSIC AND RELIGION.

Music as a medium of praise and prayer—The music of antiquity—The trumpet and harp in Sacred Writ—Music and the early Christians—Singing schools, ecclesiastical modes, and Guido d'Arezzo—The folk-song and church music—The Flemish school culminating in Lassus—What Palestrina did for sacred music—Characteristics of Palestrina and his works—The "form" of the Mass.

IF the oratorio be the highest art-form by means of which music can be made the vehicle for religious thought, it is interesting to go very far back in the history of musical tone in order to trace, from its earliest beginnings, the association of melody and song with those innate attributes of the human soul, praise and prayer—the instinctive reverence of the thing created for the Creator. Musical vibration (*i. e.*, periodic sound) forms a wondrous, and as yet only

Music as a medium of Praise and Prayer

partially understood factor in the symmetry of the universe—the order which is Heaven's first law. In that probably oldest book of Sacred Writ, Job, we read that, when the Almighty laid the foundations of the earth, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."[1] Allowing for poetic imagery and figurative speech, the idea of a burst of glorified sound from things animate and inanimate at the dawn of Creation seems to associate music from the start with all that is great, powerful, and divine—the palpable demonstration of existence, movement, and even of life itself. The association of music with the revolution of the heavenly bodies is a very old belief, and held sway among all the great nations of antiquity, the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, and Chinese in particular. Music as the outward expression of worship—the looking up of an inferior to a superior being—found, doubtless, its first outlet in Nature, through the songs of the birds, ere man himself came into existence. What more likely than that the human race, in moments of exaltation especially, should pour forth, with the singing voice, its sense of obligation and thanksgiving to a supreme Power?

Concerning the music of the antediluvians, we know little outside the biblical statement that Jubal was "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (*lit.* pipe).[2] The Children of Israel, while captives in Egypt, probably had ample opportunity of noting the introduction of musical in-

The Music of Antiquity

[1] Job xxxviii. 7.

[2] Gen. iv. 21.

struments into the religious services of Pharaoh's dominions. In how far the Hebrews were indebted to the Egyptians for their knowledge of music and musical instruments, it is impossible to say. It may, however, be inferred with some probability that Miriam's song, supplemented by chorus of women and performed with timbrels and dances, was borrowed from an Egyptian rite of religious jubilation. The harp, both in its ancient Keltic and Jewish varieties, is also generally acknowledged to have had an Egyptian origin, prototypes of the hand-harp, or Kinnor, of David, as the larger polychord Bardic harp of the Kymric and Gaelic peoples, being depicted on many Egyptian monumental remains, notably in the tombs at old Thebes.[1] In the matchless sacred lyrics of the Royal Psalmist we find several instruments recommended as fitting accompaniments to the praise and worship of God. "Praise Him," says the minstrel-king, "with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."[2] In the Psalms, indeed, we see the first great achievement

[1] One curious distinction is to be noted between the pictorial delineations of ancient Egyptian harps and the Hebrew and Keltic instruments of similar character. In the former there is no forearm or pillar, this being apparently an addition, in order to maintain the tension of the strings, of one or both of the two latter races.

[2] Psalm cl. 3-6.

in the realm of sacred music; and although it is to be regretted that no trace of the original music survives—it being in all probability mostly of an improvised nature—yet the text itself and its marked antiphonal structure; the frequent inscriptions, "To the Chief Musician"; the continual exhortations to sing, to play the harp, and to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord;" even the very title "Psalm" (which means sacred song or hymn)—all these indicate that the words were written either for, or in conjunction with, music, and thus intended to be rendered. In this connection it is curious to note that the harp was closely associated with prophecy and divination among the ancient Hebrews. King David himself says, "I will open my dark saying upon the harp;"[1] and a still more remarkable passage occurs where Elisha, apparently doubtful as to what answer to make to Kings Jehoram and Jehoshaphat when they inquire from him concerning the issue of an impending attack upon the Moabites, calls for a minstrel. "And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."[2] Such portions indicate surely that music was looked upon by the seers of old almost as a channel of communication with the Deity, whereby divine inspiration, wisdom, and knowledge might be brought within the reach of man. Under King Solomon, much care and attention was bestowed upon the musical services of the Temple. No definite records, however, of the nature of the music therein performed has come down to us: we only know that

[1] Psalm xlix. 4. [2] 2 Kings iii. 15.

the multitude of musicians, chosen from among the Levites (whose duty it was to conduct the musical portion of the services), was very great. Upon the appointment of Solomon as king, at the close of the reign of David, we read that "'four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made,' said David, 'to praise therewith.'"[1] According to Josephus, the Temple supply of musical instruments and appurtenances is almost past belief. The famous historian records that, in Solomon's Temple, there were no less than 200,000 silver trumpets and 40,000 harps and psalteries of pure copper—accommodation even for such a band seeming scarcely credible.

The preponderance of trumpets over harps in this computation will be noted. The part which the trumpet played, and still plays, in Jewish ritual is indeed of peculiar interest. Special care was taken with the construction of the two celebrated Mosaic silver trumpets—directions being given that they were to be made out of the same piece of metal. These were used as signals for the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness; and they subsequently took an honoured place among the treasures of the Temple. It is presumed that these were the instruments depicted in relief on the famous Arch of Titus at Rome, whereon we see the Roman soldiers carrying away the seven-branched candlestick and other sacred belongings to figure as trophies saved, after the destruction of the

The Trumpet and Harp in Sacred Writ

[1] 1 Chron. xxiii. 5.

Temple at Jerusalem, to adorn the triumph of the conquering Emperor on his return to Rome. The Schofar, another form of sacred trumpet, is still to be seen in the synagogues of to-day. It differs from the straight silver trumpets delineated on the Arch of Titus in that it curves upwards to the bell, the margin of which is often richly ornamented. The "set times" at which, in Jewish worship, the Schofar is blown, fall at the beginning of the New Year and on the Day of Atonement. Throughout the entirety of the Scriptures the trumpet fills a solemn and important function. It is mainly the attribute of the awe, might, and majesty of God. The walls of Jericho fell at the blowing of the sacerdotal trumpets; prophecy declares that a trumpet-call will herald in the Day of Resurrection; and, in that most mysterious and wonderful of all Biblical writings, the Apocalypse or Revelation of St. John, a voice "as of a trumpet" invites the Evangelist to pass from earth to heaven, and seven trumpets were given to the seven angels whereon to sound for the last seven plagues.

In the last great book of the New Testament, just referred to, the worship of Divinity is mainly carried on by majestic choral song to the accompaniment of myriads of harps—a glimpse of the occupation of a future state which, in the eyes of the unbeliever, is foolishness, but to the earnest thinker, especially if he be a musician, is symbolic of the infinite possibility of the mighty language of sound as a channel for the emission of man's deepest and holiest thoughts and

inspirations. There is something very impressive in that description of the triple song of glory—that of the four living creatures, the four-and-twenty elders, and of the angelic host—as told in simple but stirring narration by the "beloved" disciple when he is shown "the things that must be hereafter."[1]

Music and the Early Christians

With the introduction of Christianity, music, as associated with divine worship, took upon it deeper emotional meaning; and, in exulting over the triumph of a risen Saviour, new forms for apter expression were sought and found in the chant, the motet, and the mass, and, later on, in the choral or hymn. The *Gloria in Excelsis* of the angels informed the shepherds of the birth of the infant Jesus on the first glad Christmas Eve. In striking contrast to this scene we read the touching account of how, at the Last Supper, "*when they had sung an hymn*, they went forth to the Mount of Olives." The "hymn" here referred to, as also the hymns of the early Christian Church, were probably psalms set to ancient Hebrew melodies then familiar at the Temple service in Jerusalem. That some of these antique tunes have come down to us in the old Ambrosian and Gregorian tones may not be unlikely. The twelve disciples, being all Jews, would most naturally adapt to the needs of the new religion those sacred songs with which they had been familiar from childhood; and what more possible than that these

[1] See Rev. iv.

melodies would be religiously memorised and preserved by the primitive converts, and would form the identical hymns sung at the first conventicles of Christians, which gave rise to the accusation of Pliny the Younger against the sect that "on certain days, they (the Christians) will gather before sunrise, and sing antiphonally (*i.e.* alternately) the praise of their God."

That music was considered a very special adjunct to Christian worship may be gathered from the fact that, as early as the fifth century, Pope Hilarius founded a singing school at Rome for the sole study of church music. Whether Greek musical theories, or the traditional Temple music of the ancient Hebrews, most influenced the so-called Ambrosian or Gregorian chants, it is impossible to say with any certainty. The church modes (or scales) were called after the corresponding Grecian modes, yet the "ecclesiastical keys" do not exactly agree with the Greek scales of similar nomenclature. Guido d'Arezzo's celebrated Choristers' Hymn,[1] which taught the gamut to youthful singers by embodying in the text what were subsequently known as the Tonic Sol-fa syllables, infers that the education of musical children—with a view to their admission to church choirs—had attracted the attention of one of the most noted theorists of his day.

Singing Schools, Ecclesiastical Modes, and Guido d'Arezzo

[1] Hymn to St. John the Baptist, who was the special patron of choristers. Starting with the first line, "*Ut* queant laxis," Guido made use of each initial syllable of successive lines as note names of the scale. Hence *Ut*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, etc.

Side by side with the music of the church, the early centuries of the Christian era saw the growth of the Folk Song—a species of secular melody which seems to have sprung from among the people themselves and to have become disseminated widely, especially among the Keltic peoples, by means of the musical performances of the bards, minstrels, and, in early mediæval times, of the trouvères and troubadours. Later on a curious amalgamation of secular with sacred elements took place when, about the fifteenth century, we find the early Flemish composers, Dufay, Ockenheim, and Josquin des Près, adapting popular folk-songs as the *Canti Fermi*, or fundamental themes, of their motets and masses. A very favourite tune with the Netherlanders was the old French chanson, "L'homme armé." Nearly every composer of the Flanders school tried his hand at a mass built upon this secular theme, that of Josquin des Près being characterised by perhaps the most advanced musicianship and, for those times, fervency of expression. Martin Luther was particularly fond of Josquin's music. The great Protestant reformer is said once to have remarked, "Josquin is a master of the notes: they had to do as *he* pleased, while they made other composers do as *they* pleased."

The Folk Song and Church Music

So high was the repute of the Flemish composers that we find them occupying important musical positions in Rome, where they were looked upon as the foremost exponents of church music. Pre-eminent among these early masters appears Orlando di Lasso, or

Lassus, who is accredited with the composition of no less than two thousand works. These were both sacred and secular, and Karl Proske thus speaks of the universality of the composer's genius:—"He (Lassus) was never unsuccessful, whether in the contemplative mood of the church, or in the merry caprices of profane song. He was great both in lyric and epic styles, and would have been still greater in the dramatic, had his age possessed this branch of musical composition."[1] The personality and work of Orlando Lassus are indeed of peculiar interest, and he forms one of the great connecting links between the early (mechanical) and more modern (emotional) schools of musical thought. As a boy he possessed a very beautiful voice, which obtained for him the appointment of chorister in the St. Nicholas Cathedral in his native city of Mons in Hainault, where he was born in 1520. So much was his singing esteemed that he is said to have been kidnapped no less than three times. A painful circumstance occurred in his youth, which deeply affected the boy's sensitive nature. His father, being suspected of coining, was tried and condemned to walk three times round the public scaffold with a collar of spurious coins around his neck. The original name of the family was Delattre. This the boy, after his parent's degradation, turned to Lassus, and he took the first opportunity to leave Hainault for Italy, having been fortunate enough

The Flemish School culminating in Lassus

[1] *Musica Divina*, famous collection of ancient church music, edited by Karl Proske (1794-1861). See also Naumann's *History of Music*.

to obtain the patronage of Ferdinand of Gonzaga. Later, we find him Chapel Master of San Giovanni in Laterano. While here, another domestic blow assailed him. News reached him that both his parents were dangerously ill. He set out for Mons with all speed, only to find both dead upon his arrival. Next, we hear of him journeying through England and France; and subsequently he spent some time in Antwerp, where his brilliant talents obtained for him the highest respect and esteem. In 1557 he was associated with the musical arrangements of the chapel of Albert V., at Munich, a position which he filled with honour until his death in 1594. Lassus obtained quite a European reputation. He was created Knight of the Golden Spur by the then Pope. Charles IX. of France commissioned him to write music to the celebrated "Penitential Psalms," in order, it is said, that the monarch might obtain rest for his soul after the terrible Massacre of St. Bartholomew. But Lassus is specially interesting to us because he was the friend and adviser of Palestrina, the so-called "Saviour of Church Music"; and from his intercourse with the great Netherlander there is no doubt but that the composer of the "Missa Papæ Marcelli" learned much that he afterwards utilised with such success in his own sacred music.

We have now arrived at an important epoch in the history of sacred music. Mention has been made of the fact that the tunes of secular folk-songs were frequently introduced into compositions for the church; and, indeed, it was not unusual to hear of the masses

of "The Red Noses," "Adieu, mes Amours," etc. Musicians also vied with each other in introducing all sorts of embellishments into sacred music, which, under the name of contrapuntal conceits or devices, gave an intricacy and triviality to their compositions that by many earnest people were considered unbecoming and unsuitable to the devout meaning of the words to which these florid effusions were set. A general sense of the profanation which had crept into church music proper at length dawned upon the clergy themselves; and, at the Council of Trent in 1562, the licences of composers, and their want of due reverence for the solemnity of the sacred text, were strongly censured and condemned. It was even intimated that no music, save Gregorian, should be performed at divine service. At this crucial point a rising young creative artist came forward, and offered to compose a mass that would entirely satisfy the ecclesiastical authorities both in the matter of devoutness and musicianship. The champion of the decadent art was Giovanni Pierluigi Aloisio da Palestrina, generally known as Palestrina, from the small town (the ancient Præneste) where he was born in 1514.[1] The result was the composition of three six-part masses, the third of which, in particular, so delighted Pope Pius IV. that he is reported to have exclaimed, "It is John (Giovanni) who gives us here in this earthly Jerusalem a foretaste of that New Song which the holy Apostle John realised

What Palestrina did for Sacred Music

[1] According to other authority, the birth date is said to be 1524.

in the heavenly Jerusalem in his prophetic trance."[1] This work was the famous *Missa* (or Mass) of Pope Marcellus, so called after a former patron of the young composer.

Characteristics of Palestrina and his Works

Not alone mediæval church dignitaries, but many eminent musicians of modern times have been deeply impressed with the nobility, solemnity, and devotion of Palestrina's sacred music. All his life the composer was imbued with a great admiration for the serene grandeur of the Gregorian chant. Added to this, his excellent skill as a contrapuntist, his taste in the smooth marshalling of voice parts, and, above all, the religious fervour and earnestness of the man himself and his heart-whole devotion to music, render all he has written the solid and lasting output of genius —a genius which knows both its powers and its limitations, and which perfects all it undertakes to perform with the utmost care and thoroughness. The traditional mode of performance of Palestrina's music, as it may still be heard at Festival time in the Sixtine Chapel at Rome, has also, no doubt, much to do with the aroma of repute which still clings to the works of the old Roman master. Mendelssohn, who, when in the Eternal City, attended the Good Friday service at the Papal chapel, was powerfully struck with the surroundings—the interior with its solemn black drapings, the absence of incense and candles, the wonderful *pianissimo* singing, the minutest care being given to

[1] *Great Musical Composers.* G. T. Ferris.

every *nuance*—and, in particular, the complete concentration of each performer in fulfilling, to every nicety of detail, his part in the solemn and impressive ceremony. The bowing of the worshippers, two by two, before the Cross, and the devout silence that is observed save when the grave music is intoned, lend, moreover, a certain touch of weird dramatic colouring to the *tout ensemble* that strongly moves the onlooker. Under the spell of such music one is filled with the spirit of worship and reverence. "This is indeed divine music," said the composer Paër, "such as I have long sought for, and my imagination has never been able to realise, but which, I knew, must exist."[1]

A few words may now be said as to the "form" of the Mass, and the sequence of its component parts. In the text of the Catholic Mass, taken as a whole, we find the embodiment of the Christian's creed — the penitence of the sinner, the succour of a Saviour, the glory of the Redeemer and the redeemed. The Mass, as to construction, may be divided into three parts:—(1) The Offertorium, or Offertory; (2) the Benediction, or Blessing; and (3) the Sumption, or Reception. Of separate numbers there are six, each differing in sentiment, character, and devotional expression, and requiring every possible variety of musical treatment. These six portions are as follow:—The Kyrie Eleison, the Gloria, the Credo, the Sanctus, the Benedictus, and the Agnus Dei, to which latter is usually appended the

The "Form" of the Mass

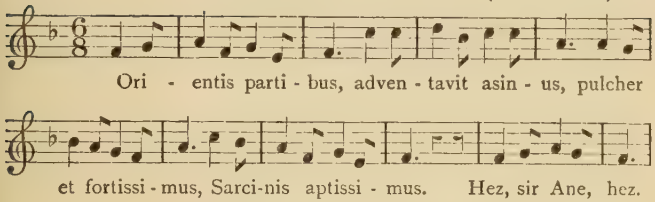
[1] Ferris.

Dona Nobis Pacem. The specific text of each of these sections gives infinite scope to the accomplished composer. To some, the supplicatory nature of the Kyrie appeals most of all; others find themselves happiest in the depiction of a state of divine beatitude, as implied in the Benedictus, upon which number the great masters have invariably expended the wealth of their genius; the Gloria, Credo, and Sanctus afford opportunity for majesty and solidity of structure; and the Agnus Dei with the beautiful Dona Nobis Pacem, lend themselves best to music at once devotional and expressive. Other forms of sacred music, such as the Church Canticles (notably the "Te Deum," the famous hymn of SS. Ambrose and Augustine), the Anthem, Motet, Hymn, the "Stabat Mater," the "Miserere," etc., were much utilised by the early (Flemish and Italian) composers; but in the Mass—wherein so many varied phases of religious attitude and feeling are connected by a great link of sequence and unity—we find the true progenitor of the Oratorio, which wanted only the greater emancipation that freedom from church dogma and ritual was destined to give it, in order to take the pre-eminence we have claimed for it in the realms of sacred music.

CHAPTER III.

"The Hymn of the Ass."

(Old French.)



THINGS SACRED AND SECULAR.

The problem of existence—The mystery of music—The secular and sacred in music — Musical drama in Greece and Rome — Early Christianity and the stage—Performance of sacred plays in church —The *St. Nicholas* of Hilarius—Sacred plays outside church precincts—The Miracle Play in England—Music in the sacred plays—The "Hymn of the Ass."

In the history of things human it is curious to note how the sacred and secular elements, always instinctively tending towards each other, occasionally attract, coalesce, or repel, according as one or the other is in the ascendant. Over and over again we are confronted with the inexplicable communion of flesh with spirit; things that

The Problem of Existence

are unseen influencing things that are seen; the ideal lending zest to the real, the material seeking inspiration from the ethereal. The very foundation of the Christian's belief that "the Word was made Flesh" and that the Essence of the Divinity once took our nature upon Him, is referred to by St. Paul as that "mystery of godliness"—the link which binds man to his Creator. We are as yet only on the borderland of discovery in things metaphysical. If movement, or vibration, of the invisible air-particles produces all the natural phenomena —sound, heat, light, and, presumably, magnetism and electricity—in a higher plane of existence, may not the Great Divine Power of the universe, after a similar fashion, evolve Life and even the Soul itself—the indestructible, immortal force that issues from, and is ever yearning for the Supernal?

The Mystery of Music

In music we see the mental emotions made appreciable to the senses and intelligence through the channel of the human ear. Through its strains we find an outlet for our feelings of jubilance and melancholy; our thanksgiving, supplication, and praise of a Higher Power. The bird sings through pure joy of existence; the ploughboy whistles as he drives the share, because he is healthy, happy, and free from the cares or the ambitions of the world; the musician pours forth his soul in melody and harmony, because his being calls for some such appreciable outlet of the unfathomable aspirations that fill his mind. The music of the mother's lullaby soothes the fretful infant to rest; the military band

enlivens the soldier on the march; the "organ's pealings" and the "full-voiced choir" raise the worshippers' hearts heavenwards in prayer or praise; music has even been known to heal those mentally diseased

BACH'S HOUSE IN LEIPZIG.

and to solace the hour of death. Thus it appears that, in Music, we have with us a great power for good—*spiritual*, in that, as far as gauging the production and extent of its influence, we know not whence it comes

or whither it goes; *physical,* because we can produce glorified tone with the human voice as also from mechanical sources of sound.

Music being possible to us pretty well under all phases and forms of existence, we need not wonder that it largely affects things secular and sacred. We have referred to the people's song creeping into the contrapuntal intricacies of early mediæval church music. We have now to refer to a still more extraordinary combination of apparently opposing elements in connection with which music plays an important part. The Stage and the Pulpit are generally assumed to be at variance with each other. Yet, in the so-called "dark ages," when the majority of people were illiterate, the stage was positively found in the church itself; and from this most potent of pulpits—whether erected within sacred edifices, or placed at street corners, or in the market-place—were promulgated, under the name of Mysteries and Miracle Plays, scriptural doctrine and dogma, and dramatised versions of the great epochs and incidents of Holy Writ. To vary and intensify these representations, music, both sacred and secular, was introduced at the interludes. Gradually the Language of Sound, in the shape of chorus singing, crept into the body of the performance itself. From such beginnings arose the idea of the sacred musical drama, to be subsequently freed from the trammels of action, and idealised in the form of the Oratorio.

The Secular and Sacred in Music

The idea of associating Music with the Drama first

came into artistic prominence among the ancient Greeks. Although the exact nature of the music linked with the works of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides is shrouded in obscurity, we may conjecture, with fair probability, that it was mainly choral; or, as has been suggested with some plausibility, the actors *intoned* their parts much after the method adopted by the officiating clergyman in the modern Anglican church service. The Romans copied the Greeks in their dramas as in other things; but the copy, under the brutality and sensuality of imperial Rome, soon degenerated into a parody, or rather a coarse caricature of the original; and it is certain that the accompanying music, being associated with unwholesome surroundings, shared the degradation of the text to which it was wedded. In time, Roman drama became thoroughly obnoxious to all moral sense, and the earnest-minded saw that, if any purification of the stage was to be attempted, it was necessary to revert to Greek models. It is curious to read that the first attempt towards the regeneration of the drama was the production of a Passion Play, Χριστός Πασχῶν (the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin), attributed, perhaps erroneously, to St. Gregory Nazianzen (fourth century).[1] This curious work is said to have been constructed closely upon the lines of Greek tragedy, save that there were no lyrical choruses. It is particularly

[1] A. W. Pollard, *English Miracle Plays.*

interesting to the classical scholar, as it contains several hundred lines of Euripides not found elsewhere.

Thus early did the sufferings and death of the Redeemer afford a grand theme for the purification and exaltation of a debased art-form. In this dramatising of the heart-thrilling story of the Divine Saviour's self-sacrifice, devout minds of the day saw also a ready and effective means of impressing the theme and doctrines of Christianity upon an unlearned and ignorant multitude. Church ritual might solemnise and overawe for the moment; but there was something to be memorised and talked about in the visual representation of the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows. Thus the very means that had hitherto been used as a tool of licentiousness, now, in the hands of the ministers of the New Religion, became a mighty factor in the moral enlightenment and instruction of the people. It is even recorded that a learned nun named Hroswitha (of Gandersheim in Saxony) wrote six plays after the design of those of the comic poet Terence, in order to show that "much better comedies (than those of Terence) might be written to inculcate strict moral and religious teaching." One of the scenes, supposed to be humorous, in one of the plays of this enterprising *religeuse,* relates how a number of holy women, being imprisoned in the kitchens of his palace by a wicked Roman governor, by devoting themselves to prayer diverted their captor's obnoxious attentions from themselves, and caused him, in a fit of madness, to make

Early Christianity and the Stage

love instead to the pots and pans in his scullery! Whether the well-intentioned Hroswitha succeeded in converting her generation by her combination of the ludicrous, and often revolting, with the sublime, does not transpire. Probably she, ere long, discovered that, in handling pitch, it is difficult to avoid defilement. Her work reminds one of the "problem" novelist who, by throwing a glaring searchlight upon society abuses and evils, hopes thereby to expose or eradicate them. It is, at best, a dangerous expedient. To point rather to all that is noble, true, and lovely in life is surely to more powerfully inculcate "a better way."

Briefly tracing the history of religious drama from these, its first, indications, we find, in the thirteenth century, St. Francis of Assisi, representing, at his forest altar, the scene of the Nativity—a young girl, with a baby in her arms, taking the part of the Virgin and Child, St. Joseph also being personated, and the *mise en scène* including the introduction of a live ox and ass. At Christmas-time it was early customary for the shepherds to come into Rome from Ambruzzi and pipe before pictures of the Virgin. The German peasants also used formerly to go round their villages on Christmas Eve in the guise of the Three Kings from the East. From such primitive customs we doubtless have the origin of the sacred drama.

At first the sacred plays, or scriptural scenes, were enacted only within the church itself. Easter was, in particular, solemnised with impressive and realistic ceremonies. As may be imagined, these representations

soon became very popular, and attracted enormous congregations. A special service in Rouen was that of Unveiling the Crucifix. So large a body of worshippers thronged for admission to witness this spectacle that, in 1316, an Archbishop of Worms found it necessary to ordain that the rite should be enacted with closed doors, and before the priests only. From a very interesting MS. of the thirteenth century (preserved in the Library of Orleans), we gather the following (abridged) account of the mode of performance of a Latin play on the Resurrection:—Three priests, robed as the three Marys, solemnly walk up the church to where a grave had been prepared, singing a lamentation for the death of the good Shepherd. At the grave is stationed an ecclesiastic arrayed as an angel, mitre on head, and palm in left hand, with branch of candlesticks on the right. Other priests personated SS. Peter and John, and "One arrayed in the likeness of a gardener." Monks, garbed as angels, invite the congregation to see the empty grave, and the sere cloth is held up to view. At this juncture the Holy Women "answer one another with outbursts of joy." The next stage-direction enjoins him, "who afore was the gardener to come in the likeness of the Lord," appropriately arrayed. The choir then greet Him with Hallelujahs, and the play ends with the singing of the "Te Deum."[1]

Performance of Sacred Plays in Church

It will be seen that music was an adjunct to the

[1] Pollard.

ceremony just described. These early sacred representations were, indeed, generally interspersed with anthems for the choristers. Such were the "Slaughter of the Innocents," in which the choir-boys personated the children (the fact of the youthful singers being *over* two years old being an inconsidered trifle), the Miracles of St. Nicholas, Adoration of the Magi, Conversion of St. Paul, Raising of Lazarus, etc. All these were written for performance within the church itself, the canticles and hymns of the day were introduced in the course of the representation, and the whole required the simplest of stage accessories, the officiating priests and monks themselves personating all the parts, male and female.

The "St. Nicholas" of Hilarius

Hilarius, the pupil of Abelard (*circa* 1125), has left three interesting sacred plays in Latin. These are the *History of Daniel* (in which the author collaborated with two other writers), the *Raising of Lazarus* (a favourite subject with the early sacred dramatists), and a *Miracle of St. Nicholas.* The subject of the latter is as follows:— A heathen had hidden treasure under the image of the saint, in the hope that it would be safe there during his absence. Upon returning to repossess himself of his valuables, the owner finds they have been taken away. In anger, he beats the image. Later on, St. Nicholas appears to the robbers, and compels them to restore the stolen goods. The unbeliever, when, upon a second search, he finds that his treasure has been returned intact to him, makes an amends to the saint for the desecration of his image, and becomes a convert

to Christianity. In this play it is also curious to note that there is a *refrain* in old French. So did the secular element continually creep in, until, at length, comic interludes were introduced in which the Devil, the often much-abused clown of the sacred drama, became the most popular personage of the presentation. But we are forestalling.

The churches soon became too small to accommodate the vast crowds that assembled within them to witness the special plays enacted at festival times. From the church the arena of action was removed to the churchyard. This resulted in the desecration of graves; and eventually, open spaces in or near the great towns, street-corners and market-places were availed of for the holding of these semi-solemn, semi-ludicrous mummeries. Once the Miracle Play passed outside the precincts of the church, laymen took the parts hitherto filled by clerical actors; and great bands of performers, which included wandering jugglers, mountebanks, and probably also minstrels, formed themselves into guilds and companies, and made a regular business of performing in the open on the occasion of all the great church feasts and holy-days. The stage used was a high wooden scaffold, with two, or sometimes three, storeys. The topmost represented heaven; the middle, earth; and the lower, hell. Sometimes the under portion was utilised as a kind of dressing-room for the performers, while the higher landings were devoted to the action. The costuming

Sacred Plays outside Church Precincts

appears to have been more glaring than appropriate or reverential. The most sacred personages were arrayed in the most absurd garbs. Thus God was presented with a white coat and gilded face, and his Satanic Majesty was invariably accompanied by a caudal appendage. The fees expended upon the dress, meat, and drink of the performers, as preserved in the old chronicles, make quaint reading. At length these representations—once they passed from out the sanctity and reserve of the church and clergy—degenerated into orgies. Biblical truths were still inculcated; but the manner in which this was done was so irreverent, and the most solemn subjects were mingled with the coarsest jesting and buffoonery to such an extent, that the more earnest-minded of the community became disgusted, and efforts were made to put a stop altogether to a practice which permitted such abuses.

The first Miracle Plays produced in England date back to the times of William Rufus. The taste for these performances soon spread through the country. York, Towneley (or Woodkirke), Beverley, Chester, and notably Coventry, were all centres which boasted "Cycles" of miracle plays. In London, in 1378, the choristers of St. Paul's prayed for the suppression of performances by "inexpert people," which shows that, so widespread was the popularity of the representations, keen rivalry, as well as incompetence and sham, had to be contended with.

In England the reign of the Miracle Play may be roughly computed to have extended from the time of

Chaucer to Shakespeare. The final performance at York took place in 1579, when the Bard of the Avon was a lad of fifteen; ten years subsequently Newcastle saw the last of the sacred mummers; Chester patronised sacred plays until the end of the sixteenth century; and in Beverley we hear of miracle plays being performed in 1604. The fashion and public taste for the representations finally seem to have died out with the demise of Elizabeth. Thus the fourteenth century saw the religious drama at its height, the fifteenth century witnessed its decay, and the sixteenth its death.[1] The custom still lingers on the Continent among the peasants of Ober-Ammergau, where, every ten years, the thrilling performance of the famous Passion Play of that place attracts crowds of spectators from all parts of the world. In passing, it may be remarked that the so-called "Morality" differed only from the Miracle Play proper in that it dealt with scriptural dogma rather than incident. It is best described as a complement of, or corollary upon, the Miracle Play. Very famous English "Moralities" were the *Harrowing of Hell* and the *Castell of Perseverance.*[2] More of the Moralities when we speak of Emilio del Cavaliere's *L'Anima ed il Corpo,* the first oratorio.

The Miracle Play in England

The introduction of *Music* into these sacred dramas is of particular interest when tracing the events which

[1] Jusserand, *A Literary History of the English People.*

[2] For further and most interesting information on this topic, see Pollard's *English Miracle Plays.*

preceded the production of the famous work just named. In the *Mystère de Jesus*, a Breton sacred drama of Hersart de la Villemarque (produced before 1530), Scene iv. of the second part, "La Resurrection," we read that Le Témoin (the witness) is directed to *sing* the words of the Angel—"Jesus, que vous cherchez, n'est point ici," etc. In most of the plays the words are indeed constantly introduced—"Tunc *cantant* Angeli" (see *Fall of Lucifer*, etc.). In the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, an old English religious play, we find the quaint stage direction—"To cheer themselves they sing a catch." Another English sacred drama, *Mary Magdalen*, has in one place—"Now xall[1] the shep-men sing," and in another part—"Here xall enter a shyp with a merry song." In the Morality, *The Castell of Perseverance*, there is an exhortation to "Pipe up [mu]sic"; and instances like this could be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

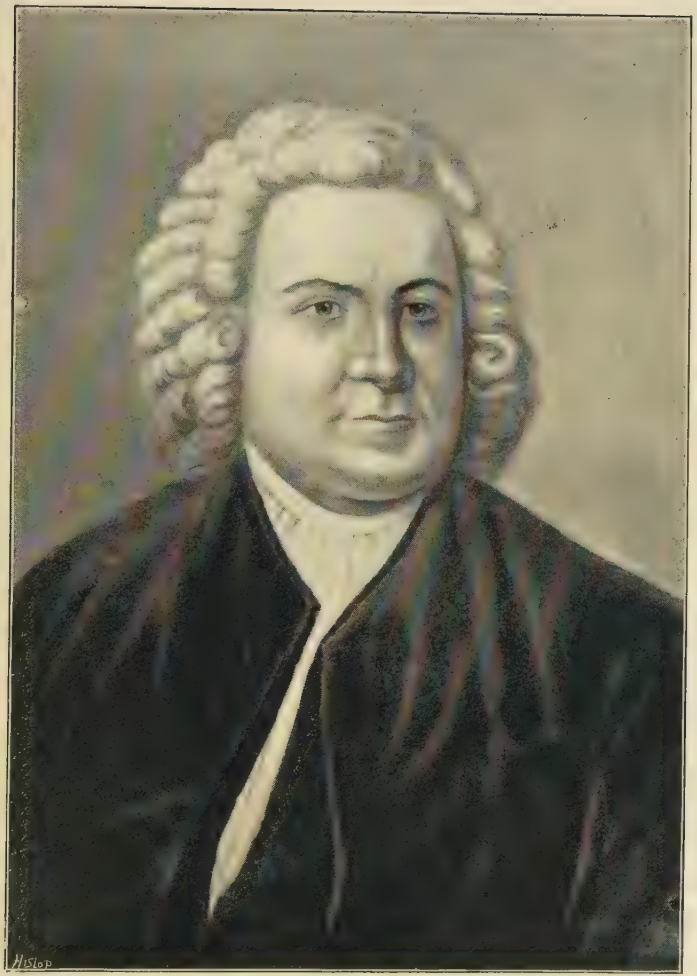
Music in the Sacred Plays

In one case the very tune sung on a specific occasion has come down to us. We refer to the celebrated "Hymn of the Ass," the melody of which prefaces this chapter. At the "Donkey's Festival," a somewhat ridiculous rite held to commemorate the flight into Egypt of Joseph with Mary and the Holy Child, a donkey was solemnly led into church caparisoned in the gown of a monk. Occasionally it was ridden by a young girl, with a babe or doll in her arms, to personify the Virgin and Child. As the procession advanced up the aisle,

The "Hymn of the Ass"

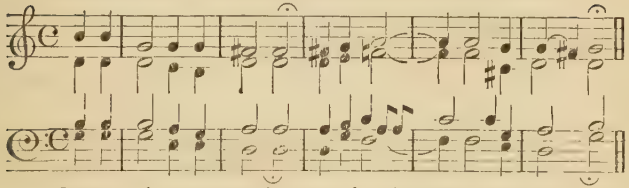
[1] Shall.

the officiating clergyman sang the Latin hymn, "Orientis partibus." At the end of each verse, the priests and people responded with "Hez, sir Ane, hez," and other grotesque imitations of the brayings of an ass. Such absurdities naturally offended those of serious religious principle; but for a long time the Donkey's Festival was one of the most popular of church representations, especially in France. The melody used is considered by some to have been originally an old French folk-song, or, probably, dance tune. It is quite modern in character, and has a certain amount of symmetric thematic construction about it which is particularly interesting. In latter days, a still further metamorphosis awaited the ditty. It was adapted by the late Sir Robert Stewart (of Dublin), as the first tune in the Irish Church Hymnal, to the well-known hymn, "Thine for ever, God of Love," the learned professor aptly changing the *tempo* from six-eight to common time. Thus this little melodic scrap has quite a history of its own, and has, under probably various rates of speed and different styles of rendering, served as dance measure, Roman Catholic chant, and Protestant choral! It forms a striking instance of the adaptability of music to all surroundings: that universality of well-constructed melody which makes it so difficult to draw the line between that which is sacred and that which is secular, and rather suggests the mysterious tendency which one element has to mingle with the other, as hinted at in the commencement of the present chapter.



Johann Sebastian Bach.

CHAPTER IV.

Chorus from *L'Anima ed il Corpo* (the first oratorio).

THE BIRTH OF ORATORIO.

The work of St. Philippo Neri—Names associated with the dawn of sacred and secular dramatic music—Concerning *the first oratorio*, "L'Anima ed il Corpo"—Curiosities of the first oratorio—Opera, oratorio, and cantata work—The tragic romance of Stradella—A. Scarlatti as a composer of sacred music—Oratorio among the Venetians—The adolescence of oratorio.

In the preceding chapters we have endeavoured to show how intimately music has been linked with religious worship and sentiment from the earliest times. In the popularity of Miracle Plays and Moralities we also see the tendency of the human mind towards a realistic—pictorial and dramatic—demonstration of man's beliefs and emotions. It was

The Work of St. Philippo Neri

reserved for the devout insight of St. Philip Neri, a Florentine who was admitted to the Roman priesthood in 1561, to strike a happy mean between the severity of church musical ritual and the abuses which had crept into the semi-secular representations of sacred drama. Shortly after his consecration, Neri founded a congregation of clergy at Rome. These gatherings, for the sake of the youths who attended them, the good man endeavoured to make as pleasurably instructive and attractive as possible. "Laudi Spirituali" (or sacred songs), hymns, and psalm-singing interspersed his exhortations; and, to still more impress scriptural history upon his hearers, he instituted the rendering of "Azioni Sacre," or sacred plays. These were versified narrations of such biblical stories as those of "The Prodigal Son," "The Good Samaritan," etc., the words being set to music for four-part chorus, with parts for solo voices. Each "Azione" was divided into two portions, the first of which was represented before the sermon, and the second as a concluding item of the service. By this judicious sandwiching of exhortation between slices of entertainment, the wise ecclesiastic ensured a good and attentive audience for his address, which always touched upon the subject-matter of the sacred play performed—in fact, formed an interesting moral comment upon it. As the drama was mounted in the vestibule or vestry of the chapel—generally called the Oratory—whither priest and congregation adjourned before and after the sermon, the term *Oratorio* came to be applied to the performances themselves. In all

things it would appear as if the utmost propriety and reverence was observed in these institutions of Neri. He took care also to associate with him, in the composition and arrangement of the music set to his text, the foremost church composers of the day, Animuccia (Chapel Master to the Pope), and afterwards Palestrina himself, having contributed to the success of the "Azioni Sacre."

The doings of the Congregation of the Oratorians naturally attracted the attention of poets and musicians; and it was reserved for a lady authoress, the gifted Laura Guidiccioni, to write the libretto of the first work which received the regular title of Oratorio. This sacred drama was entitled *L'Anima ed il Corpo,* and was constructed somewhat after the fashion of the then very popular Moralities, being rather allegorical and doctrinal than descriptive of a Scriptural incident. The music of this first oratorio was composed by Emilio del Cavaliere, who had already won fame by his musical settings of "Il Satiro" and "La Disperazione di Fileno," two pastorals from the pen of the distinguished poetess named, which were performed at the Florentine Court in 1590, and very favourably received. Laura Guidiccioni had also given the composer a text for his "Il Guico della Cieca," rendered at Florence in 1595. In these three works the collaborators foreshadowed a great art achievement that was to mark a new epoch in the history of music—namely, the *Euridice* of Peri,

Names Associated with the Dawn of Sacred and Secular Dramatic Music

the *first opera*, which, in 1600, was produced with much magnificence at Florence on the occasion of the marriage of Maria dei Medici to Henri IV. of France. In this connection it is curious to note how, when a new idea, or a revolution of any kind, is "in the air," the same results are often arrived at independently by more than one inventive mind.[1] It would almost seem as if the need for a reform or innovation were "catching," and that creative genius, when such a need asserted itself, was particularly liable to infection. While Neri was evolving oratorio form, and Cavaliere, with Laura Guidiccioni, were experimenting in secular and sacred music-drama, Count Giovanni Bardi, an accomplished Florentine *savant*, was holding musical and art *réunions* at his house in order to rehabilitate, if that were possible, the traditions of ancient Greek drama, and revive, in mediæval Italy, the old Athenian stage. Associated with Bardi were some of the foremost *connoisseurs* and musicians of the day, including the accomplished author and musician Vincentio Galilei (father of the great astronomer Galileo), Caccini the composer, and Jacopo Peri of *Euridice* fame. While matters were progressing in Rome towards the production of the first oratorio, Galilei had taken the pathetic incident of Count Ugolino (from Dante's "Inferno") and set it to music for one voice, with lute accompaniment. This, when he performed it himself before Count Bardi and his circle, so

[1] Cf. the invention of the principle of the pianoforte by Cristofori, Schröter, and Marius, independently, and within a few years of each other.

pleased the hearers that Galilei then arranged portions of Jeremiah's "Lamentations" after the same *monodic* fashion. "This form of song," says Dr. Ritter, "seems to have been really the first attempt at composition for one voice independent of counterpoint."[1]

To return to the work of Emilio del Cavaliere, we find the following curious directions for the rendering and arrangement of a similar composition, said to be given by the composer himself[2]:—

Concerning the First Oratorio, "L'Anima ed il Corpo"

"It is recommended to place the instruments of accompaniment behind the scenes. (These instruments were, in Cavaliere's work, a double lyre, a harpsichord, a large guitar, and two flutes.)

"(1) The words should be printed, with the verses correctly arranged, the scenes numbered, and the characters of interlocutors specified.

"(2) Instead of the Overture or Symphony to modern musical drama, a madrigal is recommended, as a full piece, with all the voice parts doubled, and a greater number of instruments.

"(3) When the curtain rises, two youths, who recite the Prologue, appear on the stage; and when they have done, *Time,* one of the characters in the Morality, comes on, and has the note with which he is to begin given him by the instrumental performers behind the scenes.

"(4) The *Chorus* are to have a place allotted to them on the stage, part sitting and part standing, in sight of

[1] Ritter, *History of Music.* [2] Burney, *History of Music.*

the principal characters; and, when they sing, they are to rise and be in motion, with proper gestures.

"(5) *Pleasure,* another imaginary character, with two companions, are to have instruments in their hands, on which they are to play while they sing and perform the ritornels.

"(6) *Il Corpo,* the Body, when these words are uttered, 'Si che hormia alma mia,' etc., may throw away some of his ornaments, as his gold collar, feather from his hat, etc.

"(7) The *World,* and *Human Life* in particular, are to be gaily and richly dressed; and, when they are divested of their trappings, to appear very poor and wretched, and at length dead carcasses.

"(8) The Symphonies and Ritornels may be played by a great number of instruments; and, if a violin should play the principal part, it would have a good effect.

"(9) The performance may be finished with or without a dance. If without, the last chorus is to be doubled in all its parts, vocal and instrumental; but, if a dance is preferred, a verse beginning thus: 'Chiostri altissimi, e stellati,' is to be sung, accompanied sedately and reverentially by the dance. These shall succeed other grave steps and figures of the solemn kind. During the ritornels, the four principal dancers are to form a ballet, 'saltato con capriole,' enlivened with capers or *entrechats,* without singing, and thus, after each stanza, always varying the steps of the dance; and the four principal dancers may sometimes

use the *galliard,* sometimes the *canary*, and sometimes the *courant* step, which will do very well in the ritornels.

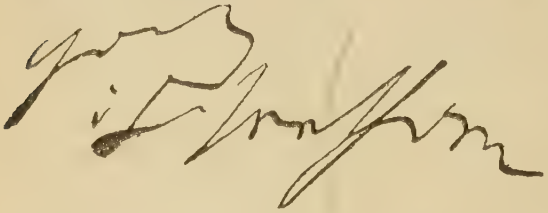
"(10) The stanzas of the ballet are to be sung and played by all the performers within and without."

We have quoted these "stage directions" at length, because they are exceedingly curious, and throw a strange light upon the mixture of secular and religious notions of the day. In the opening recommendation to place the instruments out of sight, we are reminded of Wagner's hidden orchestra at Bayreuth—an idea which throws a pleasing garb of mystery over the performance, and, at the same time, gives a subdued effect to the accompaniment. The instruments mentioned, as used in this early oratorio, are worth noting. It seems strange that a "chest of viols"[1] should not be included. Yet it is to be remarked that, in No. 9, the addition of a violin is suggested as an improvement to the instrumental *ensemble*. This is an interesting testimony to the fact that, in 1600, viols were becoming somewhat obsolete, while the recently perfected violins of Amati, Stradivarius, etc., were not as yet in regular use in the instrumental combinations of the day. Thus slowly does a great innovation grow familiar to the world.

In direction No. 1, we see an anticipation of the modern Programme or "Book of Words." Possibly this was one of the first occasions upon which the

[1] A "chest of viols" meant the complete set of viols (the predecessors of the violin family), or the stringed orchestra of those times.

printer's art enabled an audience to follow the words of a musical composition. In No. 2, we find an odd mixture of things sacred and secular. The fact of prefacing a sacred drama with the performance of a Madrigal[1] reminds us that, upon the second performance of *Israel in Egypt*, Handel introduced some Italian



arias between the choruses so as to add variety to the oratorio! The stage directions in Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 show that, as far as dramatic representation went, the rendering of this first oratorio differed in no sense from that which we look for in operatic representation. *Time,* it will be seen, is to be provided with a starting note upon which to intone his part (No. 3). In No. 4 we perceive an attempt to follow the traditions of the Greek dramatic *choros,* the members of which were believed to have enacted and sung their parts much in the manner described. What a sensation a modern oratorio chorus would make if they accentuated their singing "with proper gestures"!

The most astonishing direction of all is that of No. 9,

[1] A Madrigal may be defined as a vocal composition for three or more voices (unaccompanied), the music being generally of a contrapuntal character.

in which it will be seen that the introduction of the Ballet is sanctioned with all seriousness. This is the more remarkable as Cavaliere's work was written to be rendered in the oratory of the new church of Neri, St. Maria in Vallicella. The fashion of the times, however, for bringing in the light and even comic element into the mysteries and miracle plays of that epoch, is to be remembered; and it might also be remarked, in passing, that the *sacred dance* is not inseparable from religious ritual, King David himself having danced before the Ark of the Lord.[1] Many things appear harmful from association and prejudice. Thus the primitive Christians—as later on did the Scottish Covenanters and Presbyterians—at first banned instrumental music from their religious services as savouring of heathenism or superstitious ritual. The dance may be considered the legitimate demonstration of joyous exhilaration, even as the genuflexion, the holding forth or upwards of the hands and arms, and the bowing of the head are the attitudes of prayer and supplication. The "poetry of motion," in a more or less subdued form, did it even extend no farther than facial expression and the sparkling of the eyes, is so closely connected with the expression of human emotion and sensation that it seems the natural outlet for *life* itself. Only when it verges upon the extravagant or unbecoming should one be careful. In this respect alone the ballet, in the exaggeration and degradation of a healthful exercise of limb, has brought obloquy

[1] 2 Sam. vi. 14.

upon the physical display of happy-heartedness and jubilance.

This first oratorio, the work of Emilio del Cavaliere, coming out at the same time (1600) as Peri's *Euridice*, the first opera, marks the commencement of an epoch destined to bear luxuriant fruit in the departments of both sacred and secular drama. At the start there was little difference, save that of subject-matter, between the two great art-forms. The new *Stilo Recitativo* (or vocal declamation), which Peri claimed to have invented upon the traditions of Greek dramatic intonation, was at once utilised in oratorio; and in all musical constructive effects—overture, aria, chorus, etc.—opera and oratorio advanced at the beginning upon similar lines. With Carissimi,[1] who became famous as a writer of sacred cantatas, oratorio seems to have taken the first step towards idealism as opposed to the realism of opera. The Cantata was essentially intended to be *sung* rather than acted. The text to which cantata music is set is, or should be, lyrical rather than epic or dramatic in character; but this condition is not always observed, and there is, indeed, much difference of opinion as to where the line of demarcation comes in between oratorio and sacred cantata. Thus, Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise* is described as a Symphony-Cantata, the word symphony being attached because the opening (instrumental) movements approach the

Opera, Oratorio, and Cantata Work

[1] Giacomo Carissimi (1604-74) is accredited with having perfected the form known as Recitative.

dimensions of the orchestral form indicated. In its musical construction the *Lobgesang* differs little, save in length, from the composer's *St. Paul* and *Elijah.* As a rule, the sacred cantata is *shorter* than the oratorio; but even in this respect we have Haydn's *Seasons*, which might, by reason of its length, be called, and often is called, an oratorio. In spite of the fact that the dramatic element comes into such sacred cantatas (or short oratorios) as Barnby's *Rebekah*, for instance, and is still more marked in secular cantatas like Bennett's *May Queen* and Cowen's *Rose Maiden*, etc., the cantata proper, as it was given to the world in the chamber cantatas of Carissimi (middle of the seventeenth century), rather avoids the personal and descriptive, and concerns itself more with the musical embodiment of a great idea, principle, or chain of (in the sacred cantata) devout thoughts or precepts. It was this trend towards contemplation rather than demonstration—a trait we recognise first, perhaps, in the cantatas and oratorios of Carissimi—that suggested the throwing of a deeper and more serious musicianship into the composition of oratorio work. This resulted in the production of that distinguishing feature of all the greatest oratorios, strong and scholarly *chorus* work. For his oratorios Carissimi chose such subjects as *Jephtha*, *Solomon's Judgment*, *Belshazzar*, *David and Jonathan*, etc. His recitatives and choruses are particularly fine. So highly did Handel rate the work of Carissimi that he borrowed some twelve bars from the "Plorate," a noble chorus in Carissimi's *Jephtha*, for bars 26 to 37 of "Hear,

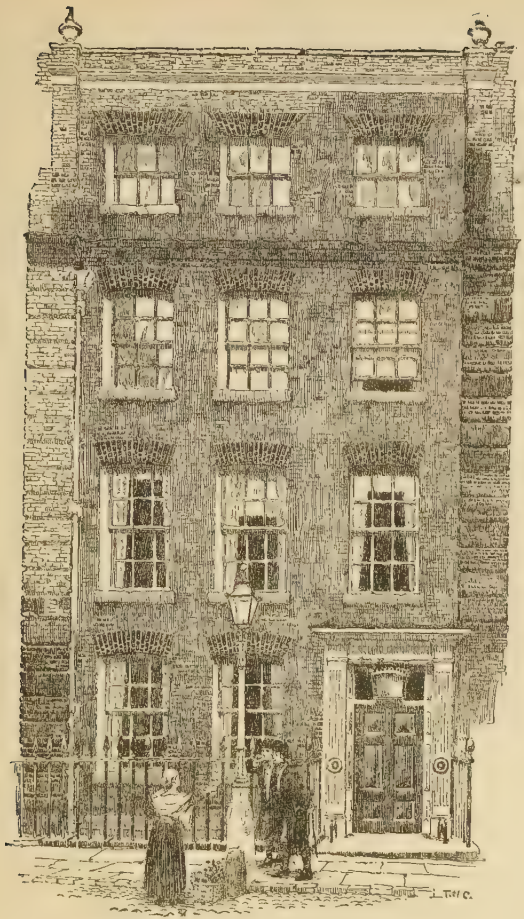
Jacob's God," in *Samson*.[1] Little as we may be able to explain or quite condone the plagiaristic habits of the great Saxon, this circumstance goes far to prove that, in his glorification of oratorio form, the composer of the *Messiah* and its companion masterpieces was deeply swayed by the work of his predecessors.

Of Italian composers of oratorio who were influenced by the example of Carissimi, doubtless the two most important were Stradella[2] and Alessandro Scarlatti.[3] Stradella's life-story was a romantic if pathetic one. He had eloped with a young lady, Hortensia, the betrothed of a nobleman. Hortensia's aristocratic lover relentlessly persecuted the pair; and, in the end, Stradella was assassinated when visiting Genoa by banditti in the pay of his rival. Stradella's works are, as yet, in manuscript, but they are described as being full of musicianship and expression. They consist mainly of madrigals, solo cantatas, and oratorios, the two best known of the latter being *Suzanna* and *San Giovanni Battista*. A touching tale is told of the first performance of the latter. Assassins, hired by his wife's admirer, were among the audience who thronged to the church to hear the new work performed. They had intended to seize the occasion as a favourable one for wreaking a jealous man's dire revenge upon the

The Tragic Romance of Stradella

[1] Naumann, *History of Music*. [2] Alessandro Stradella, 1645-81.

[3] Alessandro Scarlatti, 1649-1725. Said to have written one hundred operas. Not to be confounded with Domenico Scarlatti, instrumental performer and composer.



HANDEL'S HOUSE, BROOK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE.
(The top storey is modern.)

composer; but so deeply stirred were even these villains' hearts by the beauty of the music that they afterwards sought out Stradella, confessed their murderous plan, and asked the musician's forgiveness. How much credence may be given to the story it is impossible to say. It had probably some foundation in fact, and appears to suggest that music may, under fitting circumstances, check the basest of human crimes, and that the music of Stradella's *San Giovanni* must have been considered a masterpiece of devotion and moving power when it was accredited with thus turning aside the murderer's knife. It is interesting to note, in passing, that the German composer Flotow[1] has written an opera *Stradella*, the plot of which embodies the main romantic incidents of the ill-fated composer's career.

A. Scarlatti as a Composer of Sacred Music

Alessandro Scarlatti, the pupil of Carissimi, is famed as being one of the greatest of the celebrated school of Neapolitan composers. He is said to have spent some time in Vienna and Munich, where he may have influenced, or been influenced by, the Teutonic music of the day. To Naples, however, the greater part of his life was given; and he seems to have been a very indefatigable worker, for his masses, cantatas, motets, etc., are reckoned by the hundreds. He was also a skilled performer upon several instruments, the organ and harp being among the number, and

[1] Friedrich Flotow, German opera composer (1812-83). Principally remembered as composer of *Martha*.

Corelli refers to him as a very accomplished conductor. Scarlatti is eminently famed as having developed the operatic *aria;* but it is in particular with regard to his church and sacred music that he now claims our attention. "As a composer," says Naumann, "Scarlatti was greatest in his sacred works. It is these that specially represent the 'Neapolitan style,' a style which for nearly a century retained a high place in the musical world. . . . With Scarlatti the severe harsh outline of the forms used by the old canonical contrapuntists was softened by free, graceful melody. It was greatly to his advantage that he employed the old church style, because in it he had, ready made, a form impregnated with deep religious earnestness. In place of the old strict thematic counterpoint, he substituted a freer development of parts so musicianly worked out, that the result was the growth of a new and vigorous church style, which rapidly gained adherents amongst musicians, and soon won also the favour of the people."[1] The oratorios attributed to Scarlatti are as follow:—*I dolori di Maria* (Rome, 1693), *Il Martiro di Santa Teodosia* (Rome, 1705; the score of this work may be seen in the National Library at Paris), *San Filippo Neri* (Rome, 1718; scored for four voices to accompaniments for stringed orchestra and lute, and written in honour of Neri), *Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Johannem* (for chorus, contralto, violin, viola, and organ). The latter work especially deserves attention as being a predecessor of the

[1] Naumann, *History of Music.*

Passion oratorios of J. S. Bach, of which more presently.

Among the Venetians we find Caldara[1] esteemed as a composer of sacred music, including oratorios. He was a companion pupil of Lotti (a composer of church music of high repute), under Legrenzi, a Venetian master of eminence. Among the oratorios of Caldara were *The Triumph of Innocence, The Revolt of Absolom, The Ascension of the Blessed Virgin*, etc. Caldara's chorus work is spoken of as being particularly masterly and all but modern in character. Almost under the heading of oratorio work come the settings of the Psalms by Benedetto Marcello,[2] one of the greatest musical and political luminaries of the Venice of his day. Marcello was a nobleman by birth and position; yet it speaks much for the esteem with which music was then regarded, seeing that a man highly placed as he made a serious study of the Art, and desired to be regarded as a professional musician. His Psalms were composed to be sung by one, two, three, or four voices; recitatives, arias, and duets are introduced; and the accompaniments are indicated by a figured bass. These works are particularly interesting, as Marcello therein utilises as themes several well-known Jewish synagogal melodies. One is reminded of the masses and motets of the early Flemish composers into which the Folk Song was introduced; and the fact that sacred, in place

Oratorio among the Venetians

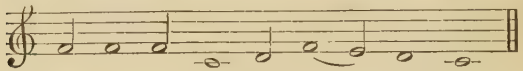
[1] Antonio Caldara, 1678-1763. [2] Benedetto Marcello, 1686-1739.

of secular, tunes are adapted, seems a foreshadowing of the subsequent oratorio treatment of the Protestant choral (or hymn tune) in the compositions of Bach and Mendelssohn.

Thus gradually, from the fusion of many ingredients and under a vast variety of surroundings, we begin to see modern oratorio take shape. Early hymnody, the Gregorian tone, the development of counterpoint and composition, the influence of the People's Song on motet and mass, the miracle play and the morality, the opera itself—all these influences being brought to bear upon religious thought—were instrumental to the forthcoming of sacred musical drama in its highest and noblest sense. At the stage to which we have reached in the Story of Oratorio there wanted but the more robust grasp of—the wider enlightenment upon—the Faith of Christ, which the Lutheran Reformation was destined to bring about. The ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, as the early French, Netherlanders, and Italians, had all a share in the evolution and development of sacred music: it needed now but the deep earnestness and religious fervour of the Teutonic mind to overcome superstition and triviality, and erect, out of the best materials that were to hand, the sacred edifice of the *Oratorio*.

CHAPTER V.

Opening phrase of "Luther's Hymn." (*Walther's Version.*)



Ein' fes - te Burg ist un - - ser Gott.
(A strong fortress is our God.)

FROM GREGORIAN TONE TO CHORAL.

Luther, priest and musician—Luther's belief in music as a mental elevator—Luther and the choral—First-fruits of the Lutheran choral — Early German Passion music — The Passions Musik of Sebastiani and Reinhard Keiser — The Gregorian chant as distinguished from the Choral—How Bach came to write Passion music—The "Matthew" Passion—The "St. John" Passion—Construction of the "St. John" Passion — Protestantism and the oratorio.

WITH the Lutheran Reformation, the popularity of a new musical form, the Choral, did much to influence the sacred compositions of German musicians. There is something always solemn-sacred and wonderful in the events that lead up to a great revolution, or some definite turning-point in the progress of human thought. It is manifestly not within the scope of this little volume to attempt an elucidation of that most mysterious of life

Luther, Priest and Musician

problems—the various phases under which *religion,* or the yearning of man's soul for his Maker, has swayed human affairs. In any case, to moralise upon or find fault with the idiosyncrasies of individual opinion is, to a great extent, futile. Martin Luther, the miner's son, being tortured by an inner consciousness that the Church, whose tenets he held, had lost its pristine strength and was no longer "all things to all men," strove to pierce the veil of custom and prejudice, and gaze upon the Truth and Love which constituted the Fatherhood of God. In vain did he seek enlightenment in the fulfilment of religious duties and in the observance of monasterial laws. In his early days of darkness and probation, music, his favourite pastime, soothed and elevated his mind, and drove from his heart the demons of doubt and fear. So strong an influence had the *Ars Divina* upon the young priest that, on more than one occasion, harmonious sounds are said to have revived him when in a fainting condition. A biographer[1] of Luther tells the following story of how some musical visitors, finding the poor youth unconscious in his cell, brought him back to sensation and peace of mind by the concord of sweet sounds:—"As they went on with their music Luther began to recover, his melancholy and sadness vanishing before the dulcet strains of the vocalists. Luther joined in their song, and, becoming bright and cheerful, entreated his friends to visit him as often as they found it possible, and not to be rebuffed by any excuse, no

[1] Matthäus Ratzeberger.

matter what they might be told, for whatever his occupation it should be immediately left, in order that he might join with his friends in their song, as he found that his melancholy and temptations fled as soon as he heard music; for," continued he, "the Devil is the greatest enemy to music, as that art renders man cheerful and hopeful, and what he least desires to see, as man falls an easy prey to his wiles when tormented by doubts and afflicted with temptations."

Luther's Belief in Music as a Mental Elevator

In this insight into Luther's soul we get the key-note of much that was to follow. Deeply sensitive, keenly self-analytical, he was powerfully conscious of the fact that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high places." Like Saul of old, the Reformer found that the evil spirit fled at the sound of music. To some such a belief may appear fanciful and far-fetched, but to many the beneficial effect of music upon a troubled mind is too well known to be doubted; and the fact that such a panacea exists for all forms of mental disturbance seems worthier more expert medical attention than it has hitherto received. Long after his own soul emancipation had been attained —when, in mounting St. Peter's staircase at Rome as an act of penance, a Divine Voice seemed to whisper in his ear, "The just shall live by faith"—Luther found the Choral, or Hymn, one of the greatest of exhilarating influences upon the minds of the people whom he

sought to elevate and instruct. And it was this very Lutheran Choral, upon its being introduced with all the most expert devices of musicianship into the oratorios of Bach and Mendelssohn, that gave to oratorio-form, when transplanted from Italy to Germany, all the majesty, grandeur, and intensity which characterise this noblest of all outcomes of musical art.

The entrance of the Choral into the religious life of Germany came about as follows:—Luther, in promulgating the doctrine whereby he particularly sought to strengthen faith in a Redeemer by inculcating the great Protestant doctrine of "the one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ the righteous," sought some steady and attractive means whereby he could draw large masses of people to personally and joyously participate in the new and simplified form of congregational worship. Being himself an enthusiastic musician, and possessing not only a fine voice but the composer's instinct, he conceived the idea of writing hymns in the vernacular; and these, with the help of his professional friend, Walther, he had the satisfaction of seeing arranged to strong flowing melodies which could be easily taken up and memorised by a large body of people. The sources from which Luther, or rather Walther, procured the Choral melodies for the famous Wittenberg *Sacred Song-Book* were various. Some of the hymn-tunes were original; and, even if all other melodies ascribed to him be questioned, there seems little doubt, spite of the learned contention to the contrary of

Luther and the Choral

Bäumker, that the great Reformer himself wrote "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott" (A strong fortress is our God), popularly known as "Luther's Hymn." Many original airs of Walther also appear in this, the first Protestant hymn-book.[1] It is also doubtless that several tunes were arranged from the missals of the Roman Catholic Church, and were founded upon Gregorian tones, the "Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr" (Glory to God in the highest)—utilised in Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*—being based upon an old Latin hymn-tune. The department of Folk Song was, moreover, largely drawn upon to supply popular tunes for the new collection, "Herzlich thut mich verlangen" (With all my heart do I long)—so frequently introduced in J. S. Bach's "Matthäus Passion"—being taken from a well-known secular tune, "Mein gemuth ist mir verwirret" (My spirit is freed).

First-Fruits of the Lutheran Choral

How powerfully these sacred melodies swayed the minds of men may best be gathered from the many collections, especially of metrical versions of the Psalms, which followed shortly upon the Lutheran Hymn-Book. Luther himself, in writing the words of his hymns, was particularly fond of paraphrasing Psalms; and his example in this respect was followed by Lossius, a rector of Luneburg, who, in 1553, published a Psalter at Nuremberg which had a preface specially

[1] The Wittenberg *Sacred Song-Book.* First edition, published in 1524, contained 43 harmonised chorals; the melody, with only one exception, being given to the tenor.

written for it by Melancthon, the friend and coadjutor of Luther. Lobwasser, Osiander, Kallwitz (or Calvisius), Eccard, and Leo Hassler were among the German musicians immediately following the Reformation period who published collections or arrangements of Psalm and Hymn tunes in the popular Choral form. Later on came the famous Genevan Psalter associated with the name of Claude Goudimel, in which appeared the "Old Hundredth," among other impressive hymn-tunes.

In addition to these, the Choral made its influence felt in nearly all the higher departments of German sacred music of the epoch that followed. Particularly was this so in the great examples of Passion Music which preceded the noblest of all Passion oratorios, that according to St. Matthew by J. S. Bach.

Early German Passion Music

As far back as the thirteenth century, the custom which prevailed in singing the Gospel accounts of the Passion was to divide the interpretation between three ecclesiastics, who were called the "Deacons of the Passion." The first of these sang the words of Our Lord, the second undertook the narrative portion of the Evangelist, and to the third fell the exclamations of the crowd (or *turba*), the comments of the Apostles, etc. It is said that the oldest known Passion Music, the composition of a Protestant, appeared in Keuchenthal's book, published in 1573.[1] Heinrich Schütz (seventeenth century), who had been trained in Italy, wrote several

[1] Carl von Winterfeld, "Der Evangelische Kirchengesang."

sets of Passion Music, and in these he made extensive use of the Choral. As well as the Lutheran sacred song, Schütz, who seems to have been an accomplished and earnest-minded musician, used the Gregorian Plain Chant in his Passion Music, working in both in the elaboration of many fine choruses which already point the way to Handel.

The Passion Music of Sebastiani

A still further advance on the work of Schütz was made by Johann Sebastiani, who, in 1672, wrote an interesting setting of Passion Music in which the Protestant chorals were harmonised with much taste and effect, and in which the narration is set to original recitative music. When we add to these distinguishing features that a solo part for the Evangelist (taken by a tenor voice) is often combined in real five-part writing with the choruses, we may conjecture that, in this interesting composition of Sebastiani, Bach found a previous type upon which to base the plan of his great Passion oratorios.

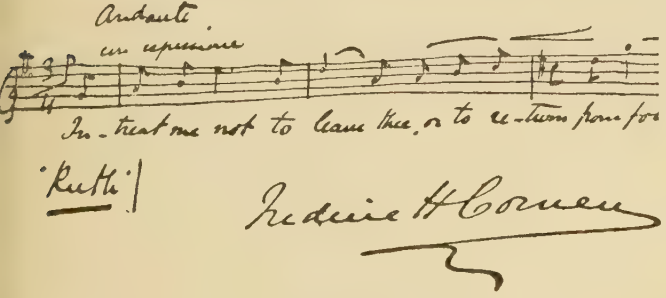
Reinhard Keiser's Work

In 1704 the well-known opera composer, Reinhard Keiser, set to music Hunold Menates' striking poem, "Die Passions Dichtungs des blutigen und sterbenden Jesu." This, when produced in Hamburg, created wide interest, although some innovations made by the author and composer (in leaving out the Evangelist's narration and the Choral) brought down pulpit anathemas upon their heads. It was thought that the whole, being divided into three dramatic scenes, savoured more of operatic

than sacred music. A novelty also was the introduction of the "Soliloquia," a kind of pious comment upon the solemn events of the narrative. This idea was followed out by all subsequent German writers of Passion Music.

We have now endeavoured to trace how, through the strong popular element of the Protestant Choral, the earnest and solemn recitatives of Sebastiani, and the fusion of a certain dramatic element into the sacred narrative (of Christ's sufferings and death) by Keiser and his librettist, oratorio form, transplanted from Italy to Germany, gradually assumed elements of construction which were destined to be evolved and glorified to the highest degree by two of the greatest of the great tone poets, J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel. If, as opposed to the mystic tonality of the Plain Chant of the Roman Church —in the interpretation of masses and motets based

The Gregorian Chant as distinguished from the Choral



upon which only ecclesiastical singers could take part —we consider the well-defined melody of the Choral, or People's Sacred Song, we see ritual as distinguished from heart worship; or, in a musical sense, the veiled tonality of the old Gregorian Tones as contrasted with the easily appreciable progressions (from dominant to tonic) of the Diatonic Scale of modern times. J. S. Bach, in giving to the world his "Wohltemperirte Klavier," or Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues, dealt the death-blow to the old "Wolf" of Unequal or Mean-tone Temperament,[1] and fixed the gamut for his own and probably many succeeding generations. To Bach it was also reserved to give to the world, in his Passion oratorios, work that, *sui generis*, has hitherto been unsurpassed for dignity, grandeur, depth, and devotional expression.

How Bach came to write Passion Music

The idea of a full oratorio setting of the Passion was first suggested to the famous Cantor of the Thomas Schule, Leipzig, by the Lutheran preacher, Solomon Deylius. This worthy divine had conceived the idea that a great sacred musical work should be brought out at Leipzig, under the auspices of Protestantism, similar to the ecclesiastical *Cantus Passionis*, then being performed at Dresden under Hasse with the best Italian singers of the day. Bach entered into the

[1] *Temperament*, in the tuning of keyboard instruments, means *adjustment*. By *Equal Temperament* is meant the modern system of tuning, or the division of the octave into twelve equal steps or semitones.

scheme with all the earnestness and pious enthusiasm of his nature; and ere long he set to work upon a libretto written, under Deylius's direction, by one Christian Friedrich Henrici (who took the assumed name of Picander). The result was the famous Matthäus Passion, which was produced, for the first time, on the evening of Good Friday, 1729, in the St. Thomas Church, Leipzig, the sermon coming between the two parts after the manner of procedure of Neri's "Society of Oratorians" at Rome.

The "Matthäus" (Matthew) Passion, the best known of the three existent sets of Passion Music (originally there were five) composed by J. S. Bach, is written for two complete choirs, each accompanied by separate orchestra and organ. The Chorals are particularly solemn and impressive: they are supposed to convey the sentiments of the whole Christian Church, and are such that an ordinary German congregation could render, although the inner harmonies are by no means simple. These majestic hymn-tunes should, however, be sung very slowly—more so, perhaps, than is the custom at English performances of the Matthew Passion. The instrumentation of Bach in this noble masterpiece is wonderful, and the polyphony marvellous. The richness of the general tone-painting grows upon us the more intimately we become acquainted with the eminently modern construction of the fine choruses and stately recitatives. "In this great work," says W. S. Rock-

The "Matthew" Passion

stro,[1] "the German form of 'Passions Musik' culminated; and in this it may fairly be said to have passed away: for, since the death of Bach, no one has seriously attempted, either to tread in his steps, or to strike out a new Ideal fitted for this peculiar species of sacred music."

It is lamentable to think that, after its first performance at Leipzig, the Matthäus Passion underwent a century's oblivion until, thanks to the efforts of Mendelssohn in Germany and Sir W. Sterndale Bennett in England, it again saw the light. Since then the late Sir Joseph Barnby did much to make the work as well known as it now is in this country. In London, especially, much credit is due to Mr. E. H. Thorne, the accomplished organist of St. Anne's, Soho, and a well-known Bach enthusiast, for the excellent annual Lenten performances which he yearly carries through with marked success.

The "St. John" Passion

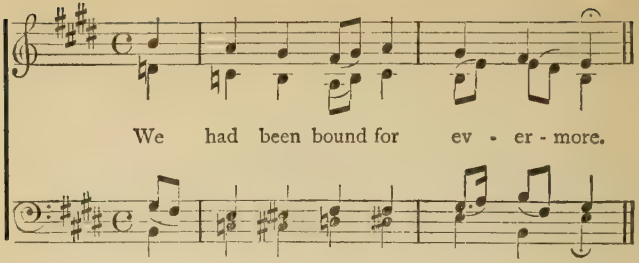
Concerning Bach's Passion according to St. John, which is also frequently performed during Lent, no reliable records of a first production exist. Herr W. Rust, who edited the work as issued by the Bach Society, affirms that four performances of the oratorio are said to have taken place in the composer's life-time. According to Sir G. A. Macfarren, in his Introduction to Novello's edition of the St. John Passion, many inherent points seem to indicate that the work in question was written prior to the Matthew Passion, and was probably

[1] "Passion Music," by W. S. Rockstro, Grove's *Dictionary*.

intended as a study for the latter. For instance, the learned commentator remarks:—"In the work under notice, the words of Jesus are not individualised from the rest of the recitative by the accompaniment of string instruments, a beautiful device by which, in the Matthew Passion, the Divine Person is surrounded, as it were, by a glory that distinguishes His figure from every other in the story. This conception is too poetical, and its good effect is too apparent, for it to have been discarded by the same composer in a subsequent work of the same class; but it may naturally have occurred to him when pondering a completed composition, and considering how further he might idealise the subject in an after setting of an analogous text."

Construction of the St. John Passion

Coming to examine briefly the construction of the St. John Passion, we find in it many resemblances to previous Lutheran settings of the sacred narrative. The text appears as recitative for a solo tenor (the Evangelist), the sayings of our Lord and other personages being given to a different solo voice. The words of the *turba* (including the Jews and Roman soldiers), as also the exclamations of the disciples, are given to the chorus. Chorals are numerous throughout the work, and are remarkable, in many instances, for their chromatic treatment. A notable example of the latter device in harmonisation of a well-known hymn-tune may be found in the chordal progression of the last phrase of "Thy bonds, O Son of God," at the words, "We had been bound for evermore":—



How striking such a sequence in Bach's time must have been, the student of Harmony can well imagine. It is rare and almost daring in conception; and, for fuller close, it will be observed that, in the penultimate chord, the "leading note" is allowed to descend. In addition to the chorals and *turba* choruses, there are also several choruses and airs, the so-called "reflective pieces," which are after the manner of a comment upon the sacred text. Of these airs and choruses, a remarkably dramatic number is the *Aria* for bass, "Haste, ye deeply-wounded spirits," interpolated with the choral interrogations, "Come where?" "Fly where?" Solemn and deeply touching is the response of the solo voice, "To Golgotha." An exceedingly beautiful *Aria* is that entitled, "I follow Thee also, my Saviour, with gladness." It might well be considered the song of "that Disciple whom Jesus loved." It is written for a treble voice, and while not free from difficulty in phrasing and execution, yet there is a certain ingenuity and simplicity—almost childlike confidence and faith—about the flow of the melody

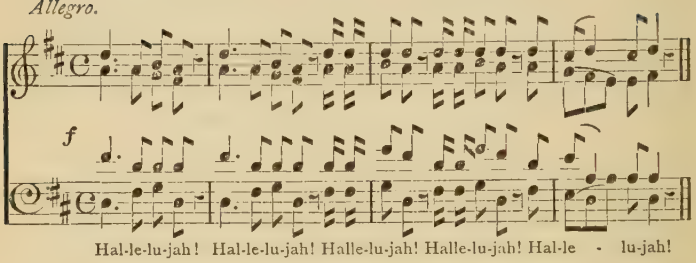
Louis Spohr

that invests this number with peculiar charm for singers and listeners.

Thus we see how Protestantism, with its distinctly human badge of the People's Sacred Song, or Choral, added the finishing touch of solidity, universality, and grandeur to the sacred edifice of the Oratorio. It was as if, through the newly-erected cathedral of noblest tone-forms, the grand voice of the organ pealed forth for the first time, filling every nook and crevice with glorified sound, the music ascending, in wave upon wave of vibrating air, to the highest pinnacle and dome, and shaking even the "storied windows" with the throbbings of its mighty pedal pipes. In the fact also that Lutheran Germany brought Passion Music to perfection, we see also an indication of the Rock upon which true Christianity was founded, namely, the self-sacrifice of a Divine Redeemer—the Man, Christ Jesus—for a sin-stricken world. Can we wonder that, influenced by his own early attempts at Passion Music, and surely inspired by the models of his contemporaries and predecessors, Handel found in the *Messiah* a theme above every theme whereon to base the greatest oratorio of his own and subsequent times—for the day seems yet far distant when we can point to a tone-cathedral more magnificent and sublime than that which "the great Saxon" has erected in honour of the Son of God.

Protestantism and the Oratorio

CHAPTER VI.

Opening bars of "Hallelujah" Chorus (*Messiah*).

HANDEL LEADS ORATORIO TO ITS PRIME.

Handel, the master musical-architect—The utilitarianism of genius—The universality of Handel's methods—Handel, man and musician—*Israel in Egypt*, *Saul*, etc.—Why Handel produced the *Messiah* in Ireland—Debatable points about the *Messiah*—Handel's pilgrimage Irelandwards—Handel's sojourn in Dublin—Production of the *Messiah*—Singers at first performance—The text of the *Messiah*—Repetition performances—First London performance—The *Messiah's* successors.

FOLLOWING up the point which we reached in the previous chapter, we may truly consider that, if among tone edifices the Oratorio, the tone-cathedral, is the masterpiece of musical architecture, then, as the

greatest of oratorio writers, the master-musical-architect is George Frederick Handel, born in 1685, at Halle, Lower Saxony. That the middle, and especially the latter part of Handel's life —his grand opera and oratorio periods— were spent on English soil, and that these islands were destined to see the production of his grandest works in the realm of sacred music, cannot fail but be subjects of pride and congratulation to every musical inhabitant of the United Kingdom. The name of Handel is so much a household word to English-speaking people—even his interment and monumental niche in the "Poets' Corner," Westminster Abbey, identifying his art-triumphs with British soil—that we have come to look upon him as one of our own race, or rather as a great musical exponent, naturalised among us, who embodied in himself and brought to a glorious climax the musical knowledge of his own and all previous ages. He may be considered to represent also the concentration, into one powerful focus of expert knowledge, of the musical traditions of all the chief Continental schools; for one of his keen perception and assimilative abilities could not have experienced the Italian and German musical teachings of the day without ingrafting what was best in them into his own system and thought, and imbuing all with the energy and fire of his transcendent genius.

Handel, the Master-Musical-Architect

Handel has been blamed for plagiarism, nor can even his most ardent admirers quite clear his reputation in this respect. The man's temperament—his resolute

determination that men and things should bend to his will and give of their best to serve him—must be borne in mind in this connection. As a child, he managed to get access to the famous little spinet in the garret, in spite of his father's opposition to his son being taught music. The otherwise tyrannical and self-opinionative opera-singers of his day, like Cuzzoni and Carestini, had to do as the often irate and positive composer wished, not as they preferred; and, while in his employment, Handel forced them to give him *the best* of their executive art. So, when it occurred to Handel that the air known as "The Harmonious Blacksmith" (a reputed melody of Wagenseil), or a selection from Urio's "Te Deum," or previous (early) works of his own, were suitable to the speedy development of his musical ideas, he did not scruple to use what came to his hand. It was simply a case of genius turning all that came within its reach to account. Nor can it be alleged, as is sometimes done, in Handel's excuse, that to utilise without acknowledgment the themes of others was a failing tacitly overlooked in composers of the day. Buononcini, Handel's famous operatic rival, is said to have been compelled to leave London, his reputation being ruined in the very zenith of his success and popularity, because it was discovered that he had palmed upon the public, as his own output, the madrigal of another composer.

The Utilitarianism of Genius

We have purposely referred, at this point, to the "borrowing" propensities of Handel in order to emphasise what we have said in regard to his ability to

draw all that was best and most useful to his purpose from the musical knowledge and experience of his time. Knowing this, it is also a striking trait of the universality of his intellect and the independence of his invention that he did *not* adopt the Choral in his oratorios, as did J. S. Bach for instance. Handel was a melodist of the first rank; and, being so, he probably disdained the extensive use of aught but melodic phrases which he had himself evolved. The sole exception of his treatment, after the manner of an air with variations, of "The Harmonious Blacksmith," proves rather than disproves his customary rule. He was, indeed, in his creative work, totally unfettered by any dogma whatsoever. The whole diatonic gamut of sound was open to him, and he wielded and moulded it to delineate his tone forms as he chose, depending on his own inspiration mainly, but not despising, when it suited him, the manner of colouring and phrasing of others. Looking upon Handel's gifts in this light, we may perhaps best gauge the infinite complexity and possibilities of a great creator: material or no material, the fabric grows beneath the magical artificer's fingers; and, if it pleases us and meets our requirements, it is best for us to take the good and beautiful set before us and ask no questions.

The Universality of Handel's Methods

Details of Handel's life may be briefly summarised as follows. We have referred to his early precocity of talent which found its development in spite of paternal opposition. He began his studies in earnest under the

famous organist Zackau, thanks to the intercession with the elder Handel of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels. Berlin, Hamburg, Florence, Venice, Rome, and Naples all had a share in the unfolding of the budding musical genius. Eventually we find him patronised by the Elector of Hanover, afterwards King George I. of England. A visit to the latter country so pleased the rising young composer that, with scant ceremony, he deserted his duties at Hanover, only to find himself in an awkward predicament when his royal master was elected monarch of this country. Handel fortunately had a good friend at Court in Baron Kilmansegge. This nobleman advised the truant musician to write some music to be performed in a boat following the King's barge upon one of its excursions on the Thames. The King, hearing the celebrated "Water Music," and being charmed with it, pardoned the delinquent and conferred upon him a pension of £200 a year. Handel was then only twenty-five years old; but the tough battle of his life was before him. Although he counted among his friends and patrons the most distinguished and highest placed men and women in London, for the next thirty years his existence was a tempest, what with the jealousies and petty spitefulness of great singers, the cabals of rival composers, and even the cruel and ungenerous opposition of a section of the nobility whom his brusque honesty and unconquerable spirit had offended. But the man was not dismayed. With the great tenor, Senesino, and

Handel: Man and Musician

the foremost *prima donna* of the day, Cuzzoni, ranged in the ranks against him; with Buononcini, a rival composer, backed by the most powerful of the Court factions of the time, George Frederick Handel ran season after season of grand opera in London until, broken down in health and finances, he was forced to declare himself a bankrupt; and, in 1737, overcome with mental and bodily prostration, and even palsied in the right hand, we find him at Aix-la-Chapelle trying to recruit his shattered energies with vapour baths and change of scene.

Previous to his temporary collapse, as a kind of respite to his work for the stage, Handel had written the oratorios, *Esther*,[1] *Deborah*, and *Athalia*, and had produced them with varying success. On his return from the Continent, restored in constitution and spirits, Handel brought out his fourth great oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*, written in the marvellously short space of twenty-seven days. But it met with a very indifferent reception from the public; and, when repeated, the composer found it necessary to introduce Italian solos between the massive choruses in order to induce an audience to sit out a second performance! The grandeur of the double choruses in this noble work is unquestionably unsurpassed in oratorio music. Our readers, if they are not already familiar with them, are recommended

"Israel in Egypt," "Saul," etc.

[1] The Duke of Chandos is said to have paid Handel £100 for the full score of *Esther*. The work was first heard at Canons, the Duke's seat.

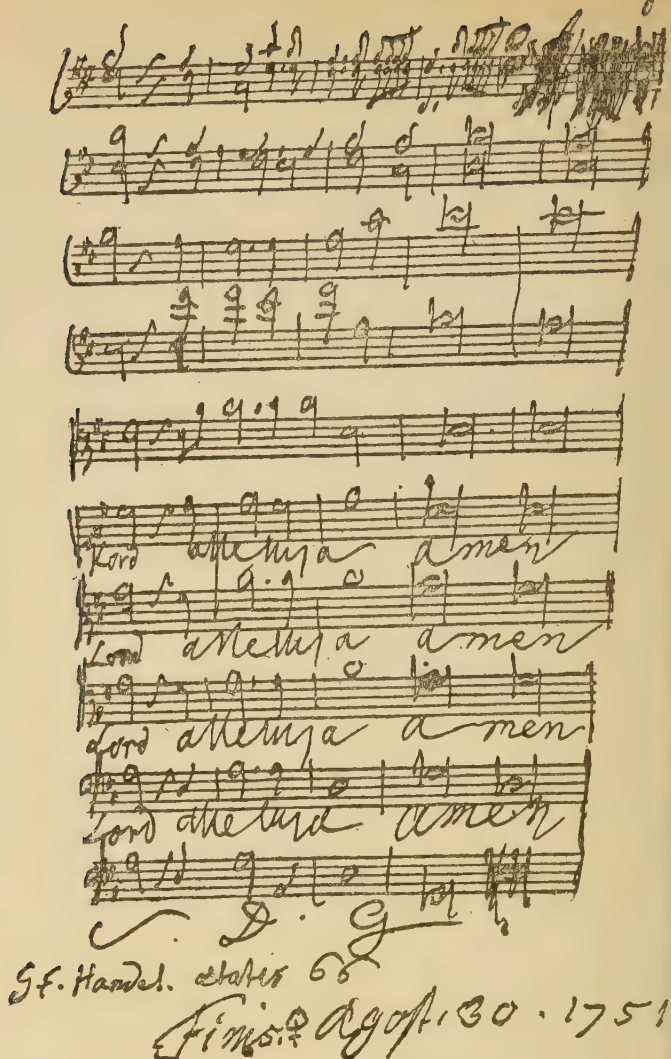
in this connection to examine such wonderful numbers as the "Hailstone" chorus, the magnificent fugal chorus, "He led them through the deep," and the great bursts of jubilation, "I will sing unto the Lord" and "Thy right hand, O Lord." The majesty of these choral numbers perhaps appeals only to us in its full force when rendered at the Crystal Palace Handel Festivals, when singers are reckoned by thousands, and there is ample space for unlimited volume of sound. In *Israel in Egypt* also occurs the noted duet, "The Lord is a Man of War," now usually and most appropriately rendered as a two-part chorus for male voices. Following upon *Israel* came the fine oratorio *Saul,* the many beautiful numbers of which the space at our command does not permit us to specify. We cordially agree with Mr. Crowest in his able estimate of this work in *The Great Tone Poets,* and think with him that Jonathan's aria, "Sin not, O King," is an especially impressive number, and that the treatment of the "infernal music" is very striking and wonderful. But *Saul,* the "Dead March" in which is almost all of the work wherewith the public are now widely familiar, met with little better fate than its predecessors. Then arrived a crisis in the life of Handel, and with it an event which shall ever stand out like a beacon light in the history of the world's music. We refer to the fact that *Ireland*, the land of the harp, whose folk-song-heritage is one of the richest and most venerable in the world, was destined to be the arena of the production of that first of all oratorios, the

Messiah, which, from the universality and seeming immortality of its fame, deserves to be now discussed as "a story within a story."

It may be asked *why* Handel, at this point in his career, chose Ireland as the best place wherein to produce the *Messiah.* The following reasons, given in an interesting little book (now very rare), *An Account of the Visit of Handel to Dublin,* by Horatio Townsend,[1] are put forward in reply:—"The special circumstances inducing Handel to visit Ireland were—the invitation of the Lord Lieutenant; the advantage of having Dubourg resident in Dublin; the opening of the Great Music Hall; and the negociations into which he had entered with the friends of three charitable institutions." For the further enlightenment of readers not able to consult Mr. Townsend's book, we might add, with regard to these statements, some brief explanatory details. The then Viceroy (1741) was the Duke of Devonshire, a patron of the composer. Matthew Dubourg, an excellent violinist, the favourite of the famous Geminiani, is described as having been a "friend" and "associate" of Handel. In 1728 we learn that Dubourg was appointed "Composer and Master of His Majesty's Band of Music in Ireland," since which period, prior to 1741, he frequently visited England, and possibly had numer-

Why Handel produced the "Messiah" in Ireland

[1] Published 1852. The writer is indebted to the courtesy of Dr. J. C. Culwick (of Dublin) for being enabled to consult this unique little volume.



FROM THE "AMEN" CHORUS IN THE "MESSIAH."

ous opportunities of meeting Handel. Any resident of Dublin may to-day go and see Fishamble Street, one of the thoroughfares to the Quays, for himself. In the middle of the eighteenth century that locality was one of the most fashionable parts of the city, possibly on account of its proximity to the Castle. "The Great Music Hall," as it was then called, and which has been described by Handel himself as "a charming room," had been opened for concerts and musical performances about four weeks before the "Great Saxon" started for Ireland. The "three charitable institutions" referred to are best gathered from the *first printed advertisement* of Handel's *Messiah* which ever appeared. We quote from *Faulkner's Journal,* issued March 27th, 1742:—

"For the Relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols, and of the Support of Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street, and of the Charitable Infirmary on the Inn's Quay, on Monday, the 12th April, will be performed at the Musick Hall in Fishamble Street, Mr. Handel's New Grand Oratorio, called the *Messiah,* in which the Gentlemen of the Choirs of both Cathedrals will assist, with some Concertos on the organ by Mr. Handel. Tickets to be had at the Musick Hall, and at Mr. Neal's in Christ Church-yard, at half-a-guinea each. N.B.—No person will be admitted without a Rehearsal Ticket, which will be given gratis with the Ticket for the Performance when paid for."[1]

[1] The first performance of the oratorio in reality took place on Tuesday, 13th April, 1742, to accommodate "several persons of distinction," who could not have attended on the Monday.

There has been a great deal of debate as to the length of time which Handel took to compose the *Messiah;* whether it was written expressly for performance in Ireland under the circumstances detailed; and as to the truth of the assertion in Mr. Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the Life of Handel,*[1] to the effect that the *Messiah* was previously performed in London, and "met with a cold reception." We will not trouble our readers with details of these discussions, but simply state the facts now proven and accepted by most foremost critics. According to the record in Handel's own handwriting, in the original score of the oratorio (now in Buckingham Palace), the work was commenced on the 22nd August, 1741, and at the end of the Third Part is the memorandum—"Fine dell' Oratorio. G. F. Handel (the astronomical sign for Saturday), September 12th, 1741." After this comes a note, in German, signifying that the work was filled up or completed on the 14th inst. Such marvellous speed of output, in regard to what may be called the world's musical masterpiece, simply takes our breath away. But with genius there is nothing impossible. Handel may, as most writers and composers do, have conceived the whole tone picture *mentally* before he committed it to paper. Anyway, we may gather that the undertaking inspired him to an extraordinary extent.[2] We

Debatable Points about the "Messiah"

[1] Published 1760.

[2] See Chapter I., p. 11. Handel's inspiration when writing the "Hallelujah" chorus.

have spoken of the reasons why Ireland was chosen as an arena for the production of the work. The following narrative will best serve to remove the stigma from London that the work was first performed there, and was indifferently received.

The *Messiah* was completed only a few weeks before Handel started for Ireland in the November of 1741—no light journey in those days. It was not likely that, during the short space which intervened between the completion of the work and the setting out of the composer for Dublin, a London performance could have taken place. Hence the British metropolis can scarcely be accused of having frowned upon one of the greatest of musical masterpieces. Besides, we learn that Handel, on his way to Ireland, was weather-bound at Chester, close to which was the village of Park-gate, from which the packet boats generally sailed to Dublin. Here (at Chester) it seems that Handel, desirous of *trying* some of the hastily transcribed choruses of his new work, placed the parts before some of the best cathedral singers of the town. This *testing* of his work would scarcely have been necessary had it been previously given in London. A funny anecdote (which although oft quoted will bear repetition here) is narrated in connection with this "trying through" of the *Messiah* parts by the Chester choir. Among the vocalists was one Janson, a printer by trade, who had a very good voice. When it came to reading "And with His

Handel's Pilgrimage Irelandwards

stripes," the good man in question failed several times to interpret his part correctly. Handel, who was particularly sensitive to a wrong note, and who was irascible often to an acute degree—his wig, in particular, being perturbed to an alarming extent—when his ear was offended, lost his temper and exclaimed in broken English: "You schauntrel! Tit you not tell me dat you could sing at soite?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply of the much mortified singer, "and so I can; but not at *first sight.*"

There seems, indeed, small reason now to doubt that, owing probably to preliminary arrangements with his friend Dubourg and the Committees of the various Dublin charities named, Handel wrote his *Messiah* expressly for his Irish visit, and that in Ireland the work was, without doubt, *first* publicly performed. In fact, *Faulkner's Journal*, speaking of the rehearsal of the great oratorio on the 8th April, 1742, distinctly says, referring to the three great charities collectively: "This noble and grand charity, *for which this Oratorio was composed.*"

Handel's Sojourn in Dublin

It will be seen that Handel was more than four months a resident of Dublin *before* the *Messiah* was produced in the April of 1742. During that period he gave series of concerts in the Fishamble Street Music Hall, consisting mainly of his own works, and all these were most heartily and enthusiastically patronised and enjoyed by the warm-hearted Irish people, for whom Handel always expressed the

highest esteem. In how far the great composer may, in the interim, have developed, added to, or revised the *Messiah* score, might form a subject for conjecture.[1] At length the rehearsal of the *Messiah*, to which ticket purchasers were admitted, took place. This was on Thursday, 8th April 1742. The Fishamble Music Hall was crowded with the *élite* of the city, and the intensest enthusiasm prevailed. According to the next issue of *Faulkner's Journal*, the work was "allowed by the greatest judges to be the finest composition of Musick that ever was heard;" the Dublin *News Letter* echoing the same sentiments in saying that "Mr. Handel's new Sacred Oratorio far surpasses anything of that nature, which has been performed in this or any other kingdom." These quaintly expressed Irish criticisms the world has since confirmed in the fullest manner.

With regard to the first regular performance of the work, which took place on the following Tuesday, *Faulkner's Journal* has this interesting notice on the morning of the great event:—"The Stewards of the Charitable Musical Society request the favour of the ladies not to come with hoops this day to the Musick Hall in Fishamble

Production of the "Messiah"

[1] When in Ireland, Handel wrote a composition entitled "Forest Music." This is believed to be still in MS. in a private collection. The first movement, in common time, is strictly Handelian; the second movement, in six-eight time, is said to savour strongly of Hibernian melodic peculiarities, "a graceful compliment," remarks Mr. Townsend, "to the country where he [Handel] was receiving a very cordial welcome."

Street. The gentlemen are requested to come without their swords." Evidently the rehearsal had produced such interest, expectation and delight, that an overflowing audience was anticipated, a forecast that events fully justified. After this memorable occurrence the press is once more elated. "Words are wanting," says *Faulkner's*, "to express the exquisite Delight it [the work] afforded to the admiring crowded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestick and moving Words, conspired to transport the ravished Heart and Ear." Even a local poet, Mr. Laurence Whyte, rushed into verse in stanzas commencing:—

"What can we offer more in Handel's name?"

As Mr. Townsend justly says, "It [the *Messiah*] made its impression once and for ever." And he adds, "Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, tendered their fervent applause to the merits of this oratorio, and their homage to the gigantic genius of its composer."

In this first performance of the King of Oratorios, the choir was composed of boys and men from the Cathedrals of Christ's and St. Patrick's. Concerning the soloists, Dr. Culwick (of Dublin) has written an interesting brochure[1] regarding his discovery of the "Original Word-Book"[2] of the *Messiah*. Rough pencil notes on the margin of this valuable find indi-

[1] Printed in 1891, for private circulation only. A copy may be seen in the National Library, Dublin.

[2] A valuable relic, now in the British Museum.

cate the names of certain local soloists who took part with Signora Avoglio[1] and Mrs. Cibber[2] (specially engaged) in the initial performance of the work. From these we learn that "Comfort ye" was sung by one Bailey, and "Thus saith the Lord" by Mason (tenor and bass respectively of the Dublin Cathedral Choirs). William Lamb (written "lamb") is down for "Behold a Virgin." Mrs. McLean (Mrs. Maclaine, wife of Handel's organist, Maclaine) is catalogued for "There were Shepherds." No name is opposite "Rejoice greatly," a selection rendered doubtless, as Dr. Culwick very justly conjectures, by Signora Avoglio. The story is now a familiar one that when Mrs. Cibber, the famous actress, sang "He was despised," one Dr. Delany, a friend of Dean Swift, with the prejudice of the times, is said to have exclaimed, "Woman, for this be all thy sins forgiven thee!"

Singers at First Performances

The sacred words of the *Messiah* text had been arranged for Handel by Charles Jennens, Esq., of Gopsall Hall in Leicestershire, a highly connected and gifted gentleman between whom and the composer much interesting correspondence took place. The following words were sent by Jennens to Handel for insertion on the title-page of the word-book:—

The Text of the "Messiah"

[1] Well-known *prima donna* of Handel's day. She sung "Let the bright seraphim" at the first performance of Handel's *Samson* (1743).

[2] Sister of Dr. Thomas Arne, the composer. Singer and actress. Described as "the first tragedian of her times."

"Majora Canamus.

"And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory, In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Dr. Culwick's remark seems worthy of attention:—"Would it not be well if these words were again restored to their proper place on the concert word-books of the *Messiah?*"

It was only natural that the Irish public should desire a repetition performance of this noble work. This was accorded to them on the 3rd of June in the memorable year named, when *Faulkner's Journal* again quaintly announced: "In order to keep the room as cool as possible, a Pane of Glass will be removed from the top of each of the windows." This was Handel's last performance in Ireland. Shortly afterwards he left in the packet for Park-gate, Chester; and in course of time returned to London, where, although his enemies still occasionally gave him trouble and annoyance, he passed the latter part of his days in honour and affluence. From a letter of his to his aristocratic librettist, Mr. Jennens, he expressed his pleasing recollection of his "success in general in that generous and polite nation" (the Irish), and adds later on: "Certain it is that this time twelvemonth I shall continue my Oratorios in

Repetition Performance

Ireland;" an intention which the great composer, however, never fulfilled.

The *Messiah* was heard for the first time in London on March 23rd, 1743. The success and appreciation accorded to the great work was instantaneous. The King, who was present at this first London performance, is said to have risen to his feet during the singing of the "Hallelujah" chorus; a custom since usually followed, as much from the exalted example thus set as from the innate feeling of a large assemblage that such homage is fitting to the majesty of the music as of the words. The great tenor, John Beard, a man as much respected and admired for his personality as his great vocal talents, took the tenor part, which indeed Handel is said to have specially written for him, as was the case in several other of the composer's great oratorios. Beard's first appearance had been made in Handel's Covent Garden performance in 1736, when the eminent singer made a great success in his renderings of the tenor portions of *Alexander's Feast*, *Acis and Galatea*, etc.

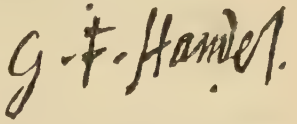
First London Performance

Among oratorios that followed the *Messiah* in marvellously rapid succession were *Samson, Joseph, Belshazzar, Hercules, Occasional Oratorio, Judas Maccabæus, Joshua, Solomon, Suzanna, Theodora* (Handel's favourite), and *Jephtha* (the last great work of the master-musician, upon whom the calamity of blindness was falling). It is not possible, in the space at

The "Messiah's" Successors, "Judas," etc.

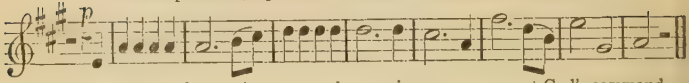
our disposal, to enter into particulars with regard to these noble works, all of them massive, impressive, and worthy of more frequent hearings than they obtain. We have lingered over the story of the events leading to the production of the *Messiah* in particular, as its unchallenged position as the chief of oratorios deserves that attention. It is a work too well known to need comment as to its contents, the many glorious numbers that compose it, some of the principal of which we have already briefly referred to in Chapter I., being as familiar as the sacred text itself to nearly every section of the community. Next to the *Messiah*, perhaps *Judas Maccabæus* is the most frequently heard of all Handel's other oratorios in this country. The chorus work of *Judas* is particularly popular with choral societies, large and small, the tuneful "See the Conquering Hero comes," and such dramatic numbers as "We hear the pleasing dreadful call," which follows the Jewish leader's stirring solo "Sound an alarm," affording admirable effects at a minimum of difficulty in the rendition. Some of the arias in *Judas* are also remarkably fine, and written in the true Handelian spirit, such a one as "From Mighty Kings," for instance, giving full scope for the display of a cultured florid soprano. All Handel's oratorios might indeed have obtained wider familiarity than they have done had it not been that they were so overshadowed and eclipsed by the surpassing magnificence and universality of the *Messiah,* that they might aptly be compared to marigolds surrounding a sunflower, beautiful in themselves, but

insignificant when matched with the greater, giant achievement of Nature's development and growth. Truly the great tone-cathedral of Handel's *Messiah* is an erection of which all nations of the world may be proud, and for which humanity must be ever grateful. Mated to the mightiest of themes, this superb masterpiece of tonal art may well be considered a foretaste of the music that will delight and exalt the human soul in a future, more blessed, state of existence.



CHAPTER VII.

Chorus phrase (soprano) from the *Creation* (Haydn).



HOW HAYDN AND BEETHOVEN GLORIFIED ORATORIO.

Influence and results of the *Messiah*—Production of the *Creation*—General characteristics of the *Creation*—Haydn's setting of the "Passion"—How England influenced the composer of the *Creation*—The humour and the devotion of Haydn—Some beauties of the work—The choruses—Some favourite solos—Haydn's *Seasons*—Conception and production of Beethoven's *Mount of Olives*—The man Beethoven—Beethoven a hero-worshipper—The "period" of the *Mount of Olives*—[Mozart note to Chapter VII.]

Influence and Results of the "Messiah"

How wide and wonderful indeed has been the influence of Handel's *Messiah* will, perhaps, never be fully computed. It appeals to men and women of all classes and grades of social and intellectual standing; it furnishes the most appropriate and impressive Christmas and Easter sacred music; it is a standard work

work—unstaled by time and use—for musical societies and all great choral organisations; it supplies unsurpassable and indispensable items for the *répertoires* of all great singers; lastly, as moral elevator, spiritual comforter — the solace of human sorrow and the strengthener of Christian faith—the *Messiah* undoubtedly wields a power that is immeasurable. Well may we all re-echo: "What thousands of hearts must have been turned by his [Handel's] tone-preaching! Where is the prelate who can move our souls as they are moved by Handel's *Messiah?*"[1] Perhaps no greater tangible result of this noble masterpiece could be named than that it was the inspiration which urged Haydn to the composition of his famous oratorio, *Creation*. Having listened, with all the intense appreciation of musical genius, to his great predecessor's noblest output, and being powerfully moved by the majesty of the "Hallelujah" chorus, the "Father of Modern Instrumental Music," as Papa Haydn is often called, determined to celebrate his declining years by the production of a work on similar lines. With the noteworthy result the musical public is widely familiar. If the *Creation* scarcely rises to the sublimity of the *Messiah*, it yet never fails to charm us by its bright melody and sunny imagery. It seems the outpouring of a spirit ingenuous, unsophisticated, and exultant in child-like faith in Nature's God—a great sacred Bird-Song of jubilance and praise to the Creator of things animate and inanimate—a tribute to the Hand

[1] F. J. Crowest in *The Great Tone Poets.*

of Love and Order that regulates the Music of the Spheres.

We have said that a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, heard in London, first inspired Haydn to write a great oratorio. It is possible that he communicated his intention to some of his many English friends: certain it is, anyway, that, as subject-matter for the grand task, Salomon offered him a libretto, compiled by Lidley from Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Later on, after Haydn's return to Vienna, Baron von Swieten translated this, introducing many alterations in the text. A sum of 500 ducats was guaranteed by Haydn's patrons for the production of the work. The first performance took place at the Schwarzenberg Palace, on the 29th and 30th of April, 1798. The work was first heard in public on Haydn's name-day, March 19th, 1799,[1] at the National Theatre. Those of the nobility who had been Haydn's guarantors paid all the expenses, and handed the profits, 4000 florins (£320) to the composer. The reception of the work was most enthusiastic. Haydn himself was much affected. "One moment," he said, "I was as cold as ice, the next I seemed on fire. More than once I was afraid I should have a stroke." A year afterwards the *Creation* was first performed in London, at Covent Garden, on March 28th, 1800; being heard subse-

Production of the "Creation"

[1] Some say 19th of January, 1799, the later date being considered a repetition (benefit) performance.

quently, for the first time, in Paris, on December 24th of the same year. This was the performance to which Napoleon I. was going when he narrowly escaped the infernal machine in the Rue Nicaise.

The beauties, structural and emotional, of Haydn's *Creation* might well claim, for their full description, a volume by themselves. On this occasion we must leave much that we would wish to say unsaid, and only try, by the most general indication, to persuade readers to a closer personal analysis of the work for themselves. A few salient points with regard to the work as a whole, and the circumstances under which it was written, must first have our attention. The entire oratorio is permeated with those personal characteristics which made Haydn, the man, beloved by his circle and contemporaries. Therein is the expert and conscientious musicianship which the composer fought so hard to obtain during the early days of his poverty and difficulties; therein is the innate happy-heartedness of a gentle and sympathetic being whom even the forty years' nagging of a shrewish wife could not sour or turn to stone; therein is, moreover, all that devout trust in the Goodness and Fatherhood of the Almighty which neither adversity nor worldly prosperity could shake in its earnestness and devotion. If we add that in the instrumental symphonies and accompaniments of the *Creation* we find the richer modern colouring in orchestration which was afterwards to reach such wondrous contrast and

General Characteristics of the "Creation"

blending of tone-tints under the hand of Beethoven, we discover something that, quite apart from the vulgarity of comparison, makes Haydn's master-oratorio a unique production even when placed side by side with Handel's *Messiah*. The differing effects which the two works produce upon us may best be described by the varied feelings aroused when we look at a smiling country landscape, redolent with the flowering hedgerows of May or early June, the noonday sun flooding all with a mellow and golden grandeur; or when we contemplate, almost with awe, the primeval forest; the snow-capped mountain-range; or the mighty, immeasurable ocean stretching to the far horizon, or breaking its billows upon a stubborn rock-bound shore. The rural beauty of Haydn's music is, indeed, striking when compared with the massive grandeur of Handel's works. Who can compare such things? They are both necessary to the full sympathetic vibrations of the infinite resonance-strings of the musical mind; they are diverse groupings of colours from the spectrum of musical sound, delightful and soul-satisfying each in its own way and under its own favourable conditions.

Haydn's Setting of the "Passion"

The circumstances and surroundings under which the *Creation* was composed were significant. The composer was within four or five years of his seventieth birthday when he set himself to his great task. Behind him were the experiences and triumphs won through his masses, symphonies, and quartets; nor was this his first trial of oratorio form; for, in 1785, while

LITERARY

Haydn's "Passion"

under Esterhazy[1] patronage, he had penned his setting of *The Passion*, or "The Seven Words of Our Saviour on the Cross."[2] A slight digression may be pardoned us if, in passing, we note that this work is entirely choral, save for soli parts with chorus, and that the touching little Intermezzo, which comes before the "I Thirst" chorus, is peculiarly plaintive for Haydn. For instance, there is suppressed suffering in the following few bars which, when appropriately rendered,

[1] Noble family of musical amateurs, who are famous as having employed Haydn, and afterwards Schubert in their service.

[2] Haydn himself thus writes in the Preface to this work: "About fifteen years ago I was applied to by a clergyman in Cadiz, and requested to write instrumental music to the 'Seven Words of Jesus on the Cross.' It was then customary every year during Lent to perform an oratorio in the Cathedral at Cadiz, the effect of which the following arrangements contributed to heighten. The walls, windows, and columns of the church were hung with black cloth, and only one large lamp, hanging in the centre, lighted the solemn and religious gloom. At noon all the doors were closed, and the music began. After a prelude, suited to the occasion, the Bishop ascended the Pulpit, pronounced one of the Seven Words, which was succeeded by reflections upon it. As soon as these were ended, he descended from the Pulpit and knelt before the Altar. The pause was filled by music. The Bishop ascended and descended again a second, a third time, and so on; and each time the Orchestra filled up the intervals in the discourse. My Composition must be judged on a consideration of these circumstances. The task of writing seven *Adagios*, each of which was to last about ten minutes, to preserve a connection between them, without wearying the hearers, was none of the lightest, and I soon found that I could not confine myself within the limits of the time prescribed. The music was originally without text, and was printed in that form. It was only at a later period that I was induced to add the text."

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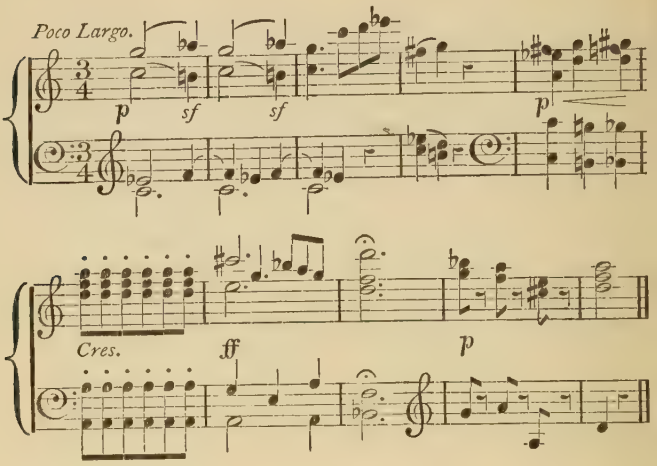
bring the sad scene of the Crucifixion vividly before us:—

Our readers will find a careful analysis of this excerpt repay them. By the simplest means, a sense of intense pathos and desolation, with an undercurrent of agony, are suggested. The diminished sevenths, as also the *nuances*, are worthy of special note.

To resume, Haydn, when he was writing the *Creation*, found himself in what may be called ideal circumstances for the evolution of the best work. He had just returned from his second visit to England; and, as a result of the fame and emolument which fell to his lot there, he was enabled to settle down in a retired

suburb of Vienna, where he could compose without molestation and free from all anxiety and worry. His successful visits to London had also wrought a marvellous change in his appreciative nature, and had brought him, even upon the borders of his "threescore years and ten," into a state of artistic rejuvenescence. "The enthusiastic plaudits of the English people kindled and kept burning in his breast a spirit of conscious strength which he knew not he possessed, or knowing, was unaware of its true worth. It was not only his countrymen who acknowledged that English enthusiasm had taught them what a great man had been born in their midst, nor the Emperor Joseph II., who is reported to have said that 'he learned from abroad what a musical hero he counted among his subjects,' but Haydn—modest Haydn himself—whose whole life, up to the time of his visit to England, had been passed in a secluded Austrian town, who states in the plainest language that it was through a foreign people that he became conscious of his strength: 'It is England that has made me famous in Germany.'"[1]

How England influenced the Composer of "Creation"

Added to all these traits and surroundings, the *humour* of the genial composer, being no longer repressed by any untoward circumstance whatsoever, reached, in his latter days, its highest artistic develop-

[1] Naumann, *History of Music*. Some critics refer to this quoted remark of Haydn as "exaggerated modesty," as he was never quite without fame in his own country.

ment. Oratorio form could not, of course, be supposed to give any opportunity to the so-called "father of humorous tone-poetry"; nevertheless, in the roaring of the lion, and the grotesque grunt of the double bassoon where the ground is described as "trod" by the "heavy beasts," we see a glimpse of ingenious comicality in such mimicry that makes

The Humour and the Devotion of Haydn

HOUSE AT ROHRAU IN WHICH HAYDN WAS BORN.

even the most astute of musical critics smile. Turning from the ludicrous to the sublime, like Handel as he descended the Vale of Years, Haydn, ever deeply religious and fervently reliant upon God for his inspiration, was more than ever devout and fully imbued with the most pious aims and motives when he wrote his *Creation*. In referring himself to this period, he is

reported to have said: "I was never so devout as then. Daily I prayed for strength to express myself in accordance with His Will." He invariably inscribed all his scores with some such mottoes as, "In Nomine Domini," "Laus Deo," etc. Ten years after the completion of the *Creation*—he is said to have spent three years of thought and work upon it, a striking contrast to the twenty-seven days' scoring of the *Messiah*—Haydn appeared, for the last time in public, to witness a grand performance of his masterpiece in celebration of his approaching seventy-sixth birthday. Salieri conducted, and many noble patrons, as well as foremost artists, including Beethoven and Hummel, were present. As the aged composer was carried to his chair, the audience rose to their feet as a sign of love and respect for the much-esteemed "Father Haydn." When the glorious major *fortissimo* chords were reached at the words, "And there was Light," the old man stood upright in spite of his feebleness; and, in response to the rapturous applause of the audience, is reported to have exclaimed, "Not from me—but from Heaven—comes all!"

Coming to the work itself, the Introduction, the "Representation of Chaos," is a wonderful piece of tone-painting. The clarinet *arpeggi,* blending with appropriate scraps on oboes and horns, invariably strike the listener. The seething of a great mass of instruments, delicate flute passages being mingled with occasional *tutti,* and the continuous alternations of *forte*

Some Beauties of the Work

and *piano,* fill our minds with a vague sense of matter in its primeval, half-molten, formless state. Then succeeds a piece of descriptive Recitative for Raphael (bass), followed by a *pianissimo* reiteration on the strings as the chorus whispers of "the Spirit" that "moved upon the face of the waters." What a stroke of genius is there in the *staccato* choral phrase (unaccompanied), "Let there be light," followed by the *pizzicato* chord on the strings which ushers in the grand C major common chord, taken *fortissimo* in the accompaniment, at the word "Light," in the phrase, "And there was Light!" Very tranquil and beautiful is the flute-coloured solo for Uriel (tenor) which follows: "Now vanish before the holy beams"—a strong contrast to the dramatic choral (fugued) passage which succeeds, remarkable for the chromaticism of both its voice parts and accompaniment, "Despairing, cursing rage." One can almost imagine the fell downward swoop of the disobedient angels as they "sink in the deep abyss." Mingled with the tumult—indeed, developed as it were from it—comes that well-known tender little passage on the violins leading into the tuneful choral phrase, "A new created world springs up at God's command." And so we might go right through the work, specifying fresh beauties at every point; but it is only possible now to linger briefly upon some of the principal choruses and solos.

Starting with the choruses, "The Heavens are telling" stands pre-eminent. The simplicity and yet expert musicianship of its structure is remarkable.

It starts almost as if it were a Choral. Later on we find imitation and fugal development taxed to the uttermost; and yet there is never a sense of confusion or complexity, never a feeling that the composer is displaying his learning at the risk of being misunderstood. Nothing, perhaps, can be named finer than the grand protraction, once the Dominant pedal is announced some thirty-eight bars from the close, of Tonic harmony. Yet all is carried out so consistently that the ear is never conscious of unrest: there is rather a feeling that we are gradually borne on, step by step, to a glorious cadence, firm and strong, as the "glory of the Lord" is displayed in the firmament. Other admirable choral numbers are the jubilant and melodious "Awake the Harp"; the second, "Achieved is the Glorious Work," with its tuneful double fugue; and the more involved but scholarly final choral number, "Sing the Lord, ye Voices all." The florid trio and chorus, "The Lord is Great," is also noteworthy for its neat balance of soli and chorus parts; and a very popular favourite is the solo (soprano) and chorus, "The Marvellous Work," in which the oboe plays such an important part in the accompaniment.

The Choruses

The *Creation* is particularly rich in descriptive solo numbers. No soprano considers her education complete without a study of "With Verdure Clad," an aria altered three times before Haydn was quite satisfied with it.[1] Students will note that this fine

[1] Bombet, *Lettres.*

melody is really written in strict sonata-form, having a first and second subject, a "middle phrase," and a repeat. "On Mighty Pens," with its strikingly descriptive orchestration, gives a facile treble good opportunity for display of all-round ability. "In Native Worth" supplies the tenor with a worthy number; and "Rolling in Foaming Billows," with the liquid refrain, "Softly purling," affords a good bass full scope for the exercise of his specific powers. It will be noticed that the contralto is not catered for. One cannot help wishing that Haydn had represented Eve's womanly sympathy through the medium of a "second treble": the solo portions for the newly created man and woman are scarcely at such a high level as the work that precedes.

Some Favourite Solos

Thomson's poem, "The Seasons," gave the aged composer his next oratorio text; and this, his last great work, also brought out in art-loving Vienna, was given, for the first time, on April 24th, 1801. It partakes so much more of the nature of a sacred cantata than an oratorio, that it scarcely calls for comment here, though critical opinion may differ on this point. After this the *maestro* composed but little. It was then *rest* for him after a life of well-spent labour. Occasionally melancholy seized him; but in his religious faith and fervour the old man always found unfailing solace. When, in 1809, the French bombarded Vienna, Haydn lay upon his death-bed. One of his last efforts was to get himself carried to the piano, upon which he played "The

Haydn's "Seasons"

Emperor's Hymn" with much fervour and loyalty. A few days after he passed away peacefully at the ripe age of seventy-seven.

The next great oratorio that arrests our attention is Beethoven's *Mount of Olives*. It was mainly written in the village of Hetzendorf (near Vienna), whither Beethoven had gone to spend the summer of 1801; but the work had been thought out a considerable time before. It is well known how fond the great composer was of the country: in the open air came to him his noblest inspirations. That he should have turned to oratorio at this period has a pathetic significance when we recollect that it was about this time that his deafness was beginning to seriously trouble him. Well can one imagine the lonely thinker, hiding behind his eccentricity and gruffness such a wealth of nobility and feeling, wandering about the rural district of Schönbrunn, near Hetzendorf, note-book in hand, picturing to himself the suffering of the Man of Sorrows in the Garden of Gethsemane, as he himself (the composer) faced the coming of a calamity that might well be reckoned, for such as he, a living death. The words of *The Mount of Olives* had been given to Beethoven by Huber, and, according to the composer's testimony, they had been written in fourteen days. The work was not heard in public until April 5th, 1803, when it was produced at the "Theater an der Wien." It seems to have been very well received: indeed, so

Conception and Production of Beethoven's "Mount of Olives"

excellent was the impression made that it was performed four times during that year by independent parties. During the rehearsals Prince Lichnowsky had shown himself particularly friendly, and, by his kind offices, had very much lightened details of preparation for the composer. Sir George Smart was the first to introduce the work to London. He performed it on February 25th, 1814, among his Lenten oratorios given at Drury Lane, the English version being probably made by Arnold, manager of the King's Theatre. Other versions were made by Thomas Oliphant and Bartholomew; but the one usually followed is that by the Rev. J. Troutbeck, which was written for the Leeds Festival. The "Engedi" text was written by Dr. Hudson, of Dublin, in 1842, David in the Wilderness being substituted for Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, owing to the religious scruples of some who see sacrilege in any singer personating the rôle of Our Saviour.

The Man Beethoven

What writer could, in a few brief paragraphs, do even faint justice to this beautiful and touching work, the one oratorio of the profound musical genius whose sonatas and symphonies yield up fresh emotional and constructive wonders upon every repeated performance? In Beethoven's music we see classicism linked to romanticism with a passion and power that are wanting in his predecessors: even Mozart's delicious melody cannot stir our inner being as does, say, the heroic anguish and soul-writhings of the *Appassionata*. Under Beethoven's genius

the Sound Language found a new and thrilling means of expression that succeeding composers have, as yet, scarcely fathomed, and certainly never exceeded; though

HOUSE IN WHICH MOZART WAS BORN.

Wagner has, it may be, invested human passion with more fervid colouring. Like Handel and Haydn, Beethoven was imbued, in spite of his eccentricities

and "cussedness"—if we be pardoned for using a very strong but expressive term—with a deep sense of devotional fervour. By faith he professed Roman Catholicism; but he was totally free from bias or narrowness. Among his favourite authors were Plato, Shakespeare, and Goethe; and it is even supposed that he was a Freemason. He was, however, strenuously opposed to all discussions upon the subject of religion. We may gather his creed from the inscriptions which he placed on his writing-desk:—"I am that which is. I am all that is, that was, that shall be; no mortal has ever lifted my veil. *He* is alone of *Himself,* and to this *One* all things owe their existence."

Beethoven, a Hero-Worshipper

Beethoven's sense of hero-worship—even when his own strange personality was the object—cannot fail to strike those who have carefully studied the records of his life-history. In the *Mount of Olives* how vividly we see the Hero of Nazareth stand forth. What a soul struggle—a mighty "wrestling in prayer"—is that pathetic recitative and aria, "Meine Seele ist erschüttert" (My Soul is shaken), with which, following the introduction, the work opens! It is a grand appeal from tried humanity to the Fatherhood of the Almighty. Very bright, angelic in its jubilance and brilliance—an aria only possible for a very flexible, *bravura* soprano voice—is the fine "Preisst, preisst des Erlösers güte" (Praise, praise the Saviour's goodness), which succeeds, intensified by the strong choral number that follows—"O Heil euch, ihr Erlösten!" (All hail, ye ransomed).

Inspired by such heavenly consolation, the Divine Hero nerves Himself to face the final pangs—"Willkommen, Tod!" (Welcome death), and the dramatic recitative rings forth, "Den ich am Kreuze zum Heilder Menschen blutend sterbe" (When I on the Cross to the saving of mankind bleeding die). The vivid choruses for the Roman soldiers and disciples which come next, are conceived with a dramatic power that thrills us; and throughout all we are impressed with the heroic struggle of Purity and Truth against Wrong—the Hero, Christ, forgiving his persecutors, and returning Love for hate. Finally comes the "Hallelujah" chorus. Comparison with Handel's famous "Hallelujah" is impossible on account of the absolutely different methods of treatment of similar subject-matter by the two great composers. Students of form will note the free, but masterly, handling of the imitatory and fugued parts of this chorus: the simplicity of the diatonic themes utilised is also remarkable. That the whole is deeply impressive no listener can deny; the only reason for the infrequency of its performance in church and elsewhere being, perhaps, owing to the high pitch, in some portions, of the soprano voice parts. The entire work resembles, in length, the sacred cantata rather than the oratorio; yet, as the oratorio characteristics are all there, the title is thoroughly legitimate.

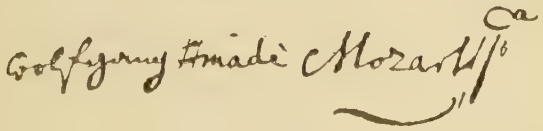
The *Mount of Olives* was written during the opening years of the nineteenth century. About the same time —from 1802 to 1804—appeared, among other works,

the "Moonlight Sonata" (Op. 27, No. 2), the Second Symphony in D Major, the "Eroica" (No. 3), and the "Kreutzer Sonata" for violin and piano. It was a transition period with Beethoven, and marked his passing from the "Haydn-Mozart" influence of his earlier works to that "second manner" in which the marked individuality of the composer, as we see it in the "C Minor Symphony," began to assert itself. In the *Mount of Olives,* therefore, side by side with glimpses of the coming Beethoven, we see the impress that such works as Haydn's *Creation* and Mozart's tuneful Masses must have made upon the receptive mind of a contemplative and highly-gifted student. Mozartian devices are particularly *en evidence;* note the melodic flow of the soprano solo and solo with chorus already referred to. Again, in the "Hallelujah" chorus, the entire treatment of the fugue themes and their simple diatonic construction—even the melodious little symphony that precedes the entrance of the subject announced by the basses to the words, "Welten singen Dank und Ehre" (Worlds sing thanksgivings and honour)—display the effect which Mozart's several "glorias" had upon his quondam disciple. Yet we realise there is an added *something,* easier felt than described, if we contrast, say, the Credo of one of Mozart's Masses with the Beethoven chorus in question. Comparisons of the various methods of genius-work are outside the question; yet we feel that, although as a melodist the earlier master will always be

The "Period" of the "Mount of Olives"

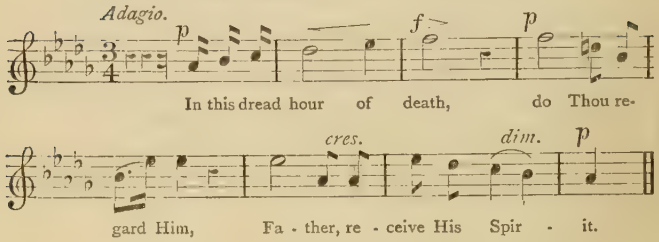
supreme, his distinguished successor invests mere tune with a philosophic depth and intensity which stirs the inmost recesses of our being. Under the magic pen of Beethoven, sacred music, in its highest form, came a pace nearer to the heart of man—we are roused, elated, moved, we know not why, and the emotional results are altogether different from what we experience when listening to Handel's *Messiah,* for instance. Reflecting upon these matters we begin to realise how wonderful and varied—in its diverse modes and aspects—is the Language of Sound. Had Beethoven written another oratorio in his riper—"third"—period, the world might have had a masterpiece of depth and intensity, hinted at, but under the constraint of Church ritual, in his impressive Masses. The *Mount of Olives* stands, however, almost unique in its humanising of a Divine Hero. It is a marvellous, if daring conception of the Man, Christ Jesus.

NOTE.—The early oratorio of Mozart, set to Metastasio's famous libretto, *La Betulia Liberata*, and the Sacred Cantata, *Davidde Penitente*, although remarkable works considering the youth of the composer, scarcely come under the category of great oratorios, and, being seldom heard, demand little more than antiquarian interest.



CHAPTER VIII.

Chorus theme (soprano) from *Calvary* (Spohr).



ORATORIO AND THE ROMANCE COMPOSERS.

Spohr and Schumann—A violinist-composer—*The Last Judgment*—The profundity of the theme chosen—*Calvary*—*The Fall of Babylon*—Schumann, a many-sided genius—An English poem and the German musician—*Paradise and the Peri:* a strongly imaginative tone-picture—The Peri's great solo—Why a *profane* oratorio?

Spohr and Schumann

We now turn aside, for a brief space, from the great masterpiece-oratorios, to the consideration of one or two works which, although the product of peculiar phases of genius or rather creative talent, from their obvious limitations in development, are to be rather placed in a category by themselves than ranked with such compositions as the

Messiah and *Creation.* We refer in particular to the oratorios of Spohr, and that unique, so-called *profane* oratorio of Schumann, *Paradise and the Peri:* works so decidedly imbued with the individualities of their respective composers as scarcely to call for universal acceptance, nor, from their innate peculiarities and

HOUSE IN WHICH MOZART LIVED AT SALZBURG.

"mannerisms," to attract a wide section of connoisseur interest. To some musical readers it may appear unwonted to couple the name of Spohr with that of Schumann in this category. Yet be it remembered that in this case we are simply considering the two composers with regard to their work in the department of oratorio, and quite apart from any contrast of the

specific chromatic talent of the gifted violinist-composer, or the vivid romanticism of a tone-painter of so many parts as Robert Schumann. Diverse as the two are in style and conception, it is, however, worth noting that both have left specimens of creative work in well-nigh every department of musical art. That the infinite enharmonic possibilities of the violin appealed to the sensitive virtuoso, Spohr, and impelled him, in his compositions, to incessant modulation, seems as certain as that the pianoforte, with its fixed gamut of Equal Temperament, urged Schumann, in order to obtain the intense colouring he desired, to seek for strong key change and daring intricacies of rhythm. The products of two such minds in any one department, though vastly differing from each other, were bound to be alike in one respect—they would offer *genre* pictures of musical idiosyncrasies that would scarcely create a wide circle of imitators. So the works we are about to refer to stand alone, rather as experiments in novel treatment of a familiar subject, than models to be copied or followed by ambitious composers.

A Violinist Composer

Taking Spohr's two principal oratorios first, *Calvary* and *The Last Judgment,* we are brought face to face with the work of a creative artist who had already won his fame as a great executant. When he made his first appearances in Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin as a solo violinist, the press was enthusiastic as to his skill as a virtuoso. Even then he had begun to compose, his beautiful violin concertos being among the items of his *répertoire*

—numbers which evoked enthusiastic admiration. These works were the predecessors of output in almost every form of composition—symphony, opera, and oratorio. Spohr's life was, indeed, a long and active one; and, both as executive artist and composer, he must be placed in the first rank of great musicians. Although not without his troubles, still, compared with the trials and life struggles of so many others of the great masters, Spohr's circumstances were such as to permit him the full and joyous exercise of his distinguished talents, both as performer and creative musician. He was already a composer of some fame —having written his operas *Faust*, *Azor and Zemira*, *Jessonda*, and his D flat Symphony (first produced by the London Philharmonic Society)—before he turned his attention to oratorio work.

"The Last Judgment"

The Last Judgment is not to be confounded with an earlier work written for the Fête Napoleon, on August 15th, 1812, on the invitation of the French Governor of Erfurt. Spohr himself says that, while writing this (his first) oratorio, he was conscious of his own ignorance of counterpoint and fugue as applied to the higher forms of composition. Consequently, before setting about the serious task of inditing oratorio choruses, he procured Marpurg's[1] Treatise on Fugue-writing. Having carefully studied the theoretical rules therein laid down, the composer wrote some half-dozen fugues, after which he felt himself sufficiently expert at the mechanical part of his under-

[1] Friedrich W. Marpurg, eminent theorist and writer on music.

taking to proceed with his first oratorio. This early attempt he afterwards seems to have laid aside. *The Last Judgment* was first heard at the Rhenish Festival of 1826, when it obtained an admirable performance, and seems to have been very well received. The work was very favourably greeted later on in England. It was first heard in this country (the English text being supplied by Professor Taylor) at the Norwich Festival, September 24th, 1830. Spohr himself conducted a performance of the work given by the Sacred Harmonic Society, on July 11th, 1838.

Turning to the work itself, we are bound to confess that it possesses much charming musicianship. But when we come to consider the awful grandeur—the tremendous nature—of the subject-matter treated, the lack of what one might name "Handelian power" is evident. Thus it is impossible to feel that the chromatic modulation in the accompaniment of the air, "Thus saith the Lord, The end is near," quite conveys the dignity and solemnity of the awe-inspiring injunction, "Prepare to meet thy God!" Again, the chorus, "Destroyed is Babylon," is fuller of a sweet pathos than a striking tone-painting of a terrible cataclysm. Very beautiful, and justly a general favourite, is the number which follows: "Blest are the departed." And, indeed, the entire work is full of attractive and scholarly scoring, and might, perhaps, have found wider acceptance if the music had been meted with words requiring less—shall we say?—stupendous treatment.

The Profundity of the Theme Chosen

Spohr's "Calvary"

Calvary was written in 1833. The death of his first wife, Dorette—a charming and accomplished harpist—to whom he was deeply attached, naturally threw a gloom over the genial composer, and not a little tainted with pathos the great work upon which he was engaged. *Calvary*, in particular, is full of beautiful and plaintive melody. We see it in the theme of the opening chorus, "Gentle night, O descend"; the solo for Mary, followed by the choral chorus of Disciples, "Though all thy friends prove faithless"; Peter's touching air, "Tears of sorrow, shame, and anguish"; and the exquisite opening theme of the chorus, "In this dread hour of Death"; to mention only a few of many excerpts that might be quoted. Spohr's *Calvary* may indeed well be considered a melodious and most delicately harmonised Passion Oratorio; less profound and masterly than Bach's works; less strong and heroic only than Beethoven's *Mount of Olives*.

"Calvary"

Calvary was first performed at Cassel on Good Friday in the year 1835. In 1839 the composer himself conducted it at the Norwich Festival, where, in spite of ecclesiastical condemnation of the libretto, it proved an immense success. Upon this occasion Spohr got a most enthusiastic reception from the English public, and he continually referred to this memorable performance of *Calvary* as one of his greatest triumphs. The objections raised in regard to the text were the same that had been made concerning Beethoven's *Mount of Olives—i.e.*, that the personality of our Saviour should

not be introduced. In reference to the text that Spohr used, it is interesting to note that it was written by Rocklitz, who had first offered it to Mendelssohn, the latter having been unable to undertake it at the time, as he was then busy over *St. Paul.*

Owing, doubtless, to the favourable impression produced by *Calvary* at Norwich, soon after Spohr's return to Cassel he received the libretto of *The Fall of Babylon*. The author was Professor Edward Taylor, and the text was accompanied by the commission that it should be set to music for the Norwich Festival of 1842. The task Spohr readily undertook and successfully accomplished. It was a great disappointment to his many English friends and admirers, as also to the composer himself, that the Elector refused to give Spohr leave of absence to personally conduct the work on the occasion in question, in spite of a largely signed petition from many eminent and noble patrons. Later on, however, in his summer vacation, the new oratorio was heard under Spohr's *bâton* in London, when it met with a most gratifying success. This work, as *Calvary*, has much the same defects—if we may venture to so characterise them—as *The Last Judgment.* The music is scarcely grand, scarcely stern enough, for the majesty and solemnity of the subjects dealt with. There is too much sweetness and melody where power and dramatic intensity would be more in keeping with the requirements of the subject-matter.

"The Fall of Babylon"

Turning to Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri,* we

find a very different type of musical genius-work. Commencing with pianoforte compositions, Schumann turned his attention to song-writing upon the occasion of his happy marriage with Clara Wieck at the age of thirty; and later on we find him engrossed by the unfathomable beauties of orchestral music, which afforded his intense and emotional temperament the wealth of colouring he desired. His B flat Symphony was the main product of this period, which was also marked by the composition of some of his finest pieces of chamber music; and after these we reach the notable year 1843, upon the 4th December of which Leipzig saw the first performance of *Paradise and the Peri*, the composer himself conducting. The work was most enthusiastically received; so much so that a repetition performance of it was held the following week, and later on in the same month it was heard in the Opera House at Dresden.

Schumann, a many-sided Genius

Schumann himself seems to have been particularly attracted by the subject of *Paradise and the Peri*. Moore's imagery and music of poetical expression appealed powerfully to his own imagination, and offered him opportunity for the variety of tone-colouring that he desired. In a letter to a friend, after his work was finished, the composer says:—"A soft voice within me kept saying while I wrote, 'It is not in vain that thou art writing!'"[1] On June 27th, 1844, Schumann wrote

An English Poem and the German Musician

[1] To Dr. E. Kruger, June 3rd, 1843.

to Moscheles, saying that, with the full support of Mendelssohn, he hoped to visit England and conduct parts of his *Paradise and the Peri* there, "which," he said, "had, as it were, sprung from English soil, and was one of the sweetest flowers of English verse." The project of an English tour seems, however, to have fallen through, owing to some difficulty in bringing out the work with English words.

Turning to the oratorio itself, though we find, perhaps, much from a technical point to criticise, the beauties of the whole, as an imaginative tone-picture, are very great. The opening phrase of the Introductory Symphony seems almost to anticipate the half-despairing cry of the Peri when, after her second offering has not opened to her the sacred portal of Heaven, she cries, "Rejected, and sent from Eden's door." Then, from the very start, we are led on through a fascinating chain of delicate rhythmic and harmonic effects, the accompaniment being all the time most vividly and exquisitely orchestrated, until military prowess, self-sacrificing love, and the sinner's repentance are portrayed by musical methods which, if not immediately appreciable to the casual listener, yet strike the student and connoisseur with their originality and intensity as something quite out of the beaten track. The choral parts have been characterised as weak. In Part III., especially, it is alleged that the whole is dragged out so as to become monotonous and wearisome. Even vocally, one cannot

"Paradise and the Peri:" a strongly Imaginative Tone-picture

help being aware of the strain upon the singers—a strain scarcely requisite, especially in the solo soprano part, to the effect produced. While acknowledging that these are defects from a performer's point of view, yet they scarcely take from the artistic value of the work itself. Strong and vivid as it is in its tone-colouring, it seems quite certain that Schumann wrote to please himself rather than the too-often clap-trap taste of the public. Even that most popular of numbers in the work, the Chorus of Houris, "Wreathe ye the steps to great Allah's throne," depends more upon its consistent development of Moore's poetic idea than upon any choral climax of striking effect. Therein we see, as if through the clouds, the flower-laden groups of spirits, happy and blessed in an innocence that knows neither earth-born sorrow nor passion, and who, as they sing their pæan of joy and devotion, float now nearer, now farther away, until, at last, the final vocal phrase falls *pianissimo* on the ear: "Joy's crystal fountain floweth for those who wait on the Lord."

The Peri's Great Solo

We have referred to the criticism that the vocal parts in the *Peri* are, to a great extent, trying to the voice and inclined to be monotonous. One instance alone will suffice to quote here to serve, in a degree, as a protest against this verdict. Take the Peri's solo—

> "Yet will I not stay, but constantly,
> From pole to pole without rest I'll wander."

There is a "sweep," a vigour, and a determination

about this number which, when well interpreted by a strong dramatic soprano, is full of fascination and spirit. The setting of the words—

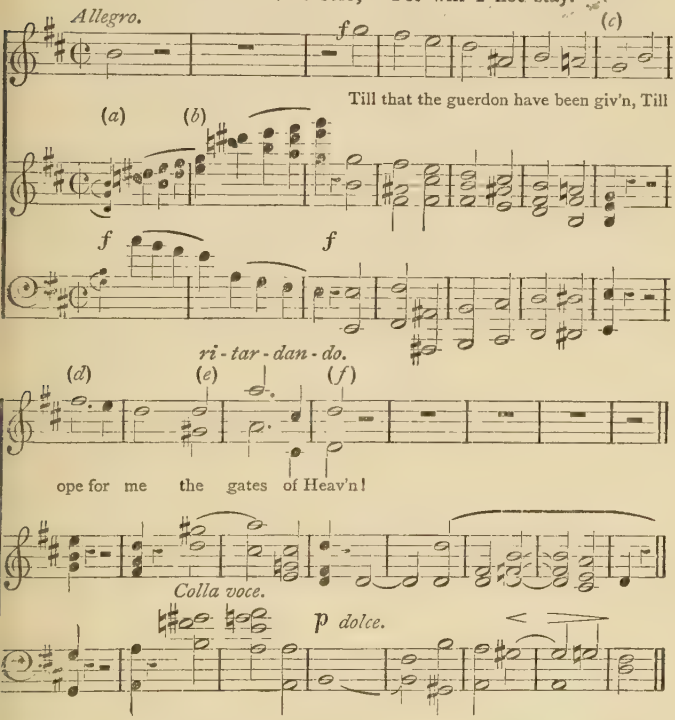
> "And though the jewel guarded be,
> Fast though the granite rocks may bind it,
> I will, I must yet surely find it,"

is full of a musical energy which cannot but impress. The final cadence is also such that therein a good soloist may find a worthy display for her powers. As the solo is not so widely known as it deserves to be, we venture to quote on the opposite page the passage referred to.

An analysis of this charming and melodious passage will well repay the musician. The construction (harmonic) of all is simple enough; some "advanced" harmonists might even say crude in places. But a close examination reveals the hand of the tone-painter of genius. There is something very suggestive both of the enormity of the Peri's task, as of the immeasurable value of her guerdon, in the opening phrases of the accompaniment at (*a*) and (*b*), emphasised by the strong use of the diminished seventh, the contrary motion between extreme parts, and the widening of distance between the upper harmonies and the bass at the repetition of the passage (*b*). In bar 3 of the vocal phrase the unusual interval of the minor fourth will be noted. It gives a peculiar colour to the melody, better felt than described. The modulation to the super-tonic minor triad at the word "giv'n" (*c*) is also very effective, mark being taken of the contrary motion between bass and soprano parts. The effect at (*d*) might be variously

described. We prefer to think of it as a daring free suspension of six in a chord of the Sixth on the sub-

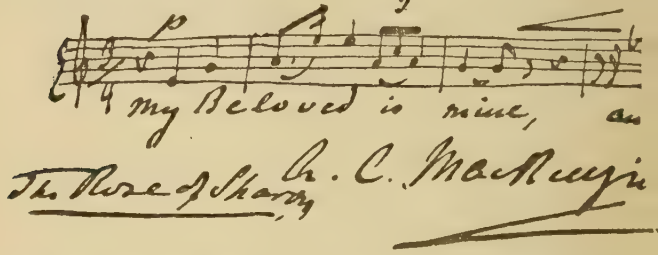
Paradise and the Peri (Schumann).

Final cadence from Peri's solo, "Yet will I not stay."

dominant, the good taste of the composer in *not* giving an "added sixth" in this place, as too anticipatory of what follows, being admirable. Lastly is to be observed

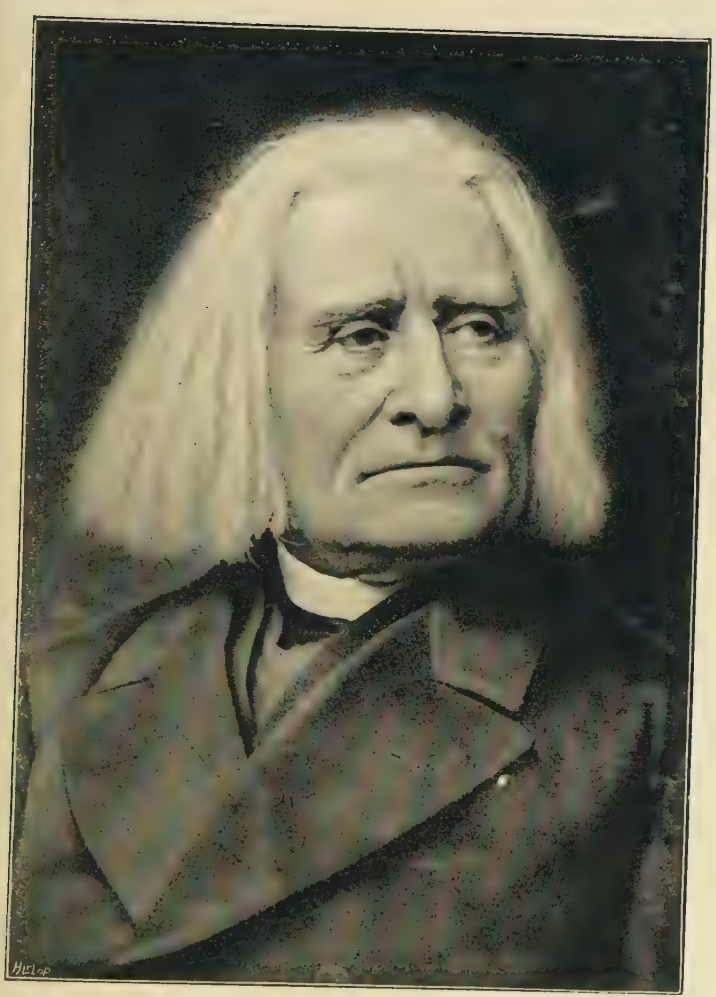
the strong final phrase, with diminished seventh harmony at (*e*), and "close" on the relative minor at (*f*), the final (tonic) cadence being relegated four bars later on to the accompaniment.

Without question many other portions of this fine work, if analysed thoughtfully, would disclose similar structural beauty and design. But our space is limited. The word "profane," as applied to this oratorio, somewhat grates upon one's sense of the fitness of things. It would be curious to know with whom the term originated. As far as we can discover, Schumann had nothing to do with it. We are aware that the word "profane" is used in a milder sense than when, for example, we speak of "profane language." Nevertheless, the epithet, as applied to the one sacred drama

Why a "Profane Oratorio"?



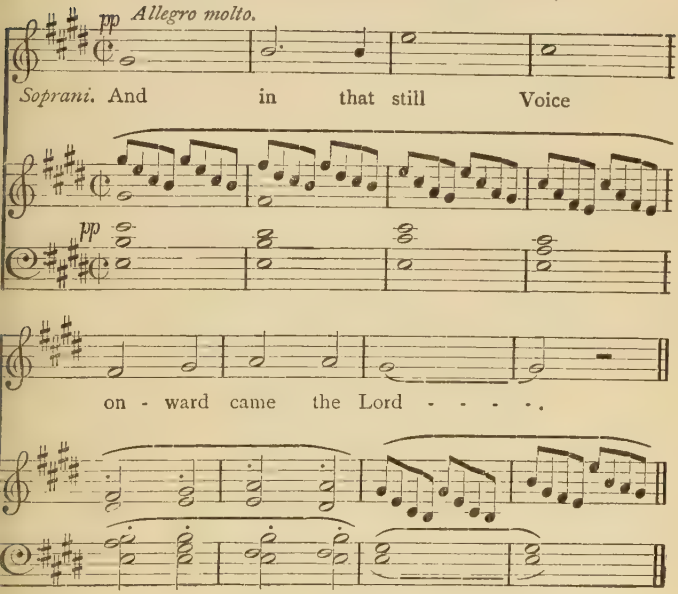
—if we may so call it—of Schumann, seems a misnomer. The difficulty of assigning an accurate appellation is, of course, obvious, but we would venture to suggest that "secular" or "lyrical" oratorio—seeing that even "sacred cantata" is scarcely appropriate—would be better than the term used.



F. Liszt

CHAPTER IX.

Choral fragment from the *Elijah* (Mendelssohn).



THE TONE-CATHEDRALS OF MENDELSSOHN AND GOUNOD.

A fortunate genius—How *St. Paul* came to be written and produced — Mendelssohn a melodious contrapuntist — Brief analysis

of *St. Paul*—English performances of *St. Paul*—Circumstance leading to the evolution of the *Elijah*—Birmingham and London performances—Some notable *Elijah* numbers—Influences that led Gounod to write his oratorios—The charm of the *Redemption* music.

UNDOUBTEDLY, during the first half of the nineteenth century, no star shone with such brilliance in the musical horizon as Felix Mendelssohn. Genius, united to a charming personality and fostered from birth by all that favourable circumstance, individual aptness, and the love and devotion of beloved ones could bestow, offers a combination of fortunate happenings and surroundings which seldom falls to the lot of mortals. The wonder was that his "luck" did not spoil Mendelssohn, or make him less willing to work. He was ever the true artist—never satisfied with anything but the best—ever striving, as if his very existence depended upon it, to attain to the highest ideals and give to the world the noblest output of his exertions. Such was the man who was destined to erect the next great Tone-Cathedrals, *St. Paul* and *Elijah*, the latter work second to none, and worthy surely to be ranked, in its own department, side by side with Handel's *Messiah*.

A Fortunate Genius

The circumstances which led to the composition of *St. Paul* are deeply instructive and interesting. Previously had come the "wonder music" of his youth, including that most delightful of all overtures, "The Midsummer Night's Dream"; his beautiful Concer-

Overtures; the "Scotch" and "Italian" Symphonies; and that superb and masterly setting, almost in oratorio form, of Goethe's impressive *Die Erst Walpurgis Nacht*. Ever a reverent devotee of J. S. Bach, there is no doubt that Mendelssohn's revival, in 1829, after a century's oblivion, of the "Matthew" Passion, gave him an insight into the majestic polyphony and religious fervour of the great Cantor of the Thomas Schule, that must strongly have influenced him a few years later in the evolution of *St. Paul*. For a long time he had been anxious to find a good libretto whereon to base a large choral work. Against the puerility and coarseness of most opera *libretti* of the day his refined mind revolted. "If," he says in one of his letters written from Paris in 1831, "that style is indispensable, I will forsake opera and *write oratorios*." It is significant that very shortly afterwards the Cäcilien-Verein of Frankfort invited him to compose an oratorio on St. Paul. As if by inspiration, Mendelssohn seems at once to have conceived the entire plan upon which his oratorio text was to be based —*i.e.*, the Biblical narrative interspersed with Chorals. This idea he communicated to his friend Marx.[1] The two then made a bargain with each other: each was to write an oratorio text-book for the other, Mendelssohn

How "St. Paul" came to be Written and Produced

[1] Adolph Bernard Marx, author and musician, 1799-1866. His work, both literary and musical, seems to have been of unequal merit; but he did much to revive an interest in little known works of Bach and Handel. He was at one time very intimate with Mendelssohn.

to be responsible for *Moses*, and Marx for *St. Paul*. Mendelssohn's part of the compact was soon fulfilled, and there exists, among his manuscripts, a sacred libretto entitled "Moses: an Oratorio, composed by A.B.M.," the whole being signed, "F.M.B., 21 Aug. 1832." But Marx was less faithful to his promise. For some unexplained reason he returned Mendelssohn's text, and refused to furnish a book upon St. Paul, on the plea that Chorals were an anachronism. Mendelssohn was therefore compelled to fall back upon his own resources; but these seldom failed him. With his close and reverent knowledge of the Bible —"The Bible," he was wont to say, "is always the best book of all"—and the assistance of his friends Fürst and Schubring, he soon put together the text of *St. Paul*. The March of 1834 saw the musical part of the task commenced. Two years subsequently, at the beginning of 1836, *St. Paul* was a *fait accompli*. Owing to the illness of Schelbe, the director of the Cäcilien-Verein at Frankfort, the work was not first produced at the latter place, but upon the occasion of the Lower Rhine Festival of 1836 at Düsseldorf. The enthusiasm evoked was very marked. An episode of the performance, which might have resulted in a provoking hitch, was the escapade of one of the false witnesses, the situation being saved by the presence of mind and ability of Fanny Hensel (*née* Mendelssohn), the composer's gifted and much loved sister. Sternda Bennett, then but twenty years of age, was present at this first performance. Shortly afterwards Mendelssoh

upon a visit of six weeks to Frankfort, met and fell in love with the charming Cécile Jeanrenaud, who afterwards became his devoted wife. Thus was *St. Paul* connected with what was, without doubt, one of the happiest years of the composer's all too short but singularly bright and blissful life.

An examination of the work itself discloses musicianship and beauty of conception and construction decidedly Mendelssohnian. Therein is all the symmetry and design, the delicious yet never enervating melody, and the clear and smooth harmonisation of the tone-painter of the concert overtures. But there is something more. We have spoken of the influence of J. S. Bach on the composer. In *St. Paul,* especially in the treatment of the Chorals, we see the triumph of modern constructive skill in the weaving together of solid, mainly diatonic, harmony. In his four-part unaccompanied writing no one has so nearly approached his great model as Mendelssohn. Even in the simple and touching three-part number, "To Thee, O Lord, I yield my spirit," if the sternness of the elder master is wanting, there is the sweetness and power inseparable from the tone-combinations of the younger. Mendelssohn must ever remind us of Bach as he might have been under the irresistible charm of Mozart's melody. If any one possessed the skill of beautifying counterpoint, it was Mendelssohn. We are powerfully struck with this in the interludes and accompaniments to his Chorals; see, for instance, "O Thou, the true and only Light" (*St. Paul*), and the

Mendelssohn a Melodious Contrapuntist

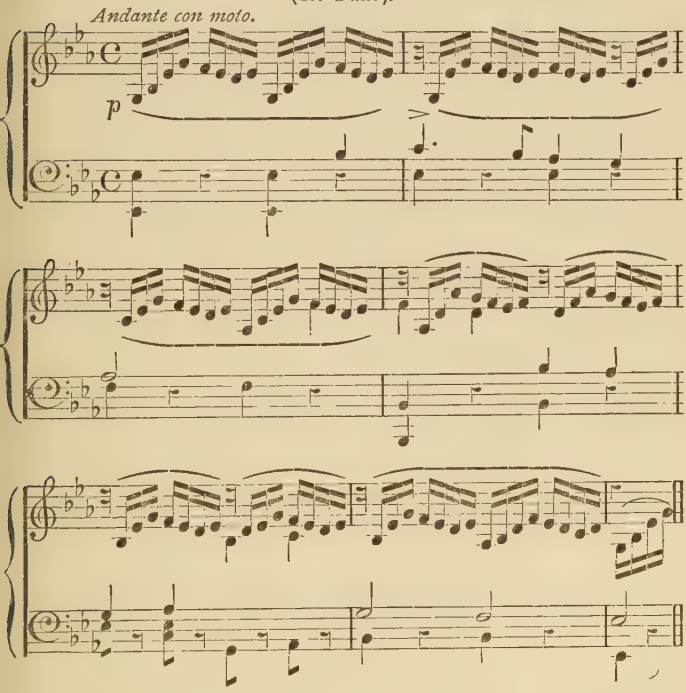
masterly setting of "Nun danket alle Gott" (from the *Lobgesang,* which is, to all intents and purposes, a short oratorio), as also in the "Three Preludes and Fugues and Six Sonatas" for organ.[1] A short, and particularly tuneful and flowing example of Mendelssohn's skill in the "free" contrapuntal combination of parts is given on the opposite page from his oratorio under consideration.

Brief Analysis of "St. Paul"

No number of *St. Paul* is without its own intrinsic beauty. We can, however, in passing, refer only to a few of the salient points of the oratorio. The dignified Choral opening, announced by the bass instruments of the orchestra, gives the key-note, as it were, to the entire work. Therein we see the steadfastness and grandeur upon which the Christian Faith is founded —the sacrifice of flesh and self for love of others. Then comes the Saint Stephen episode, vividly *indicated* rather than dramatised. Afterwards we have the pure and lovely aria, "Jerusalem," with its delicately-scored accompaniment for wood wind, horns, and strings, without the strident voice of the oboe. Present also are the wonderful choruses, "Take him away" and "Stone him to death." We are deeply moved as we listen, and cannot help but admire the irreproachable good taste of Mendelssohn which makes this entire opening portion of his oratorio a kind of Prologue to the first entry of the Defender of the One-God Faith of Israel at the fine

[1] Written shortly after his marriage in 1837. Published in cheap edition by Peters.

bass solo, "Consume them all." Almost like the voice of an angel there comes the lovely contralto fragment,

Instrumental Introduction to Chorus, "Happy and Blest are they" (*St. Paul*).

marked *arioso* by the composer, "But the Lord is mindful of His own." Full and satisfying in its vocal

and instrumental effects is the noble chorus, "O great is the depth," which forms a conclusion to the First Part of the oratorio. Mendelssohn himself is said to have been particularly fond of the sweetly flowing theme of "How lovely are the messengers." Certainly it was that which he chose to improvise upon when he had his first memorable interview with our late beloved Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. Somewhat of the same type of *cantabile* melody forms the principal subject of the favourite organ Prelude in G from the "Three Preludes and Fugues." A slight flavour of the Pagan element—afterwards so powerfully used in the Baal choruses of *Elijah*—is effectively introduced in the chorus, "O be gracious, ye immortals." The well-written cavatina for tenor, "Be thou faithful unto death," and the final chorus with its bright fugal second part, "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul," are other notable excerpts from a work which we would gladly hear oftener in its entirety.

English Performances of "St. Paul"

St. Paul was performed for the first time in England at Liverpool on October 3rd, 1836; and was heard in September of the following year, rendered by the Sacred Harmonic Society at Exeter Hall, London; being given a little more than a week later (20th September, 1837) at the Birmingham Festival. Upon the first of these occasions Mendelssohn was among the audience, and had thus an opportunity of being a *listener,* for the first time apart from conducting duties, to his work. He records of the event in his

private diary that he found it "very interesting." Concerning the rendition given to the oratorio by the Sacred Harmonic Society, he afterwards expresses himself thus in a letter—a pleasing tribute to English chorus-singers:—"I can hardly express the gratification I felt in hearing my work performed in so beautiful a manner,—indeed, I shall never wish to hear some parts of it better executed than they were on that night. The power of the choruses—this large body of good and musical voices—and the style in which they sung the whole of my music, gave me the highest and most heartfelt treat; while I thought on the immense improvement which such a number of *real amateurs* must necessarily produce in the country which may boast of it."[1] Later on, the success of Mendelssohn's appearance in the triple rôle of composer, conductor, and executant (pianist and organist) was phenomenal. England has certainly never been behindhand in giving a royal welcome to genius when it visits her coasts.

To enter into anything like detail with regard to *Elijah* is precluded by our space limitations. From the composer's private journal we discover that he was discussing an oratorio text on the great Jewish prophet with Klingemann on the occasion of his London visit of 1837. Upon his return to Leipzig Mendelssohn was, for some few years, mainly taken up with his work in connection with the Gewandhaus Concerts, which interested him very much, some chamber music

[1] Letter to Sacred Harmonic Society. (Quoted by kind permission of Mr. Husk and the Committee.—Grove's *Dictionary of Music*.)

and his setting of the 95th Psalm being the main products of this period. In 1839 we once more find him busy over the *Elijah* subject, the idea of which had been suggested to him by that striking passage in 1 Kings xix. 11: "Behold, the Lord passed by." Already he had submitted various parts of Holy Writ and the order of certain scenes to his friend Schubring, having, some short time before, discussed "St. Peter" as a possible theme. But, as yet, no music seems to have been written. Between 1839 and 1840 came both the *Lobgesang* and the *Festgesang*. In 1841, "the long, tedious Berlin business," as Mendelssohn himself characterises it, in connection with his court appointment in the German capital, began to worry him. Shielded as he had been all his life from annoyance, the petty etiquette and conditions of his post as Capellmeister tried his sensitive spirit beyond endurance. *Athalie* came in 1842; and in 1843 the Leipzig Conservatorium was opened with the names of Mendelssohn and Schumann among the list of professors. At last, by May 23rd, 1846, the first part of the *Elijah* was finished. The composer seems to have been very pleased with his output. "I am jumping about my room for joy," he writes to his friend, the celebrated singer Jenny Lind; "if it only turns out half as good as I fancy it is, how pleased I shall be!" The two summer months that followed were very hot and sultry; but Mendelssohn, in the midst of many other duties, worked unflaggingly at

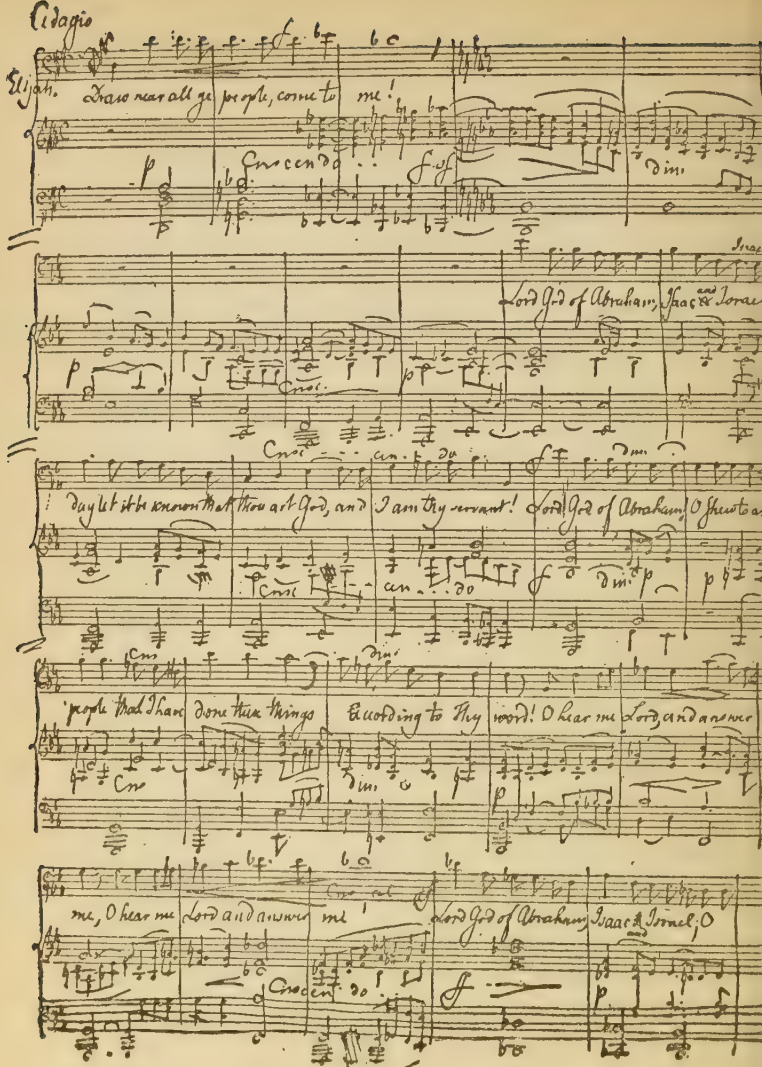
Circumstances leading to the Evolution of the "Elijah"

his oratorio, with the result that all was in Mr. Bartholomew's hands for translation by the end of July.

On the 26th August *Elijah* was first heard at the Town Hall, Birmingham, Mendelssohn himself conducting. It was a striking and wonderful performance. It seems that, just as the gifted musician stepped to his place at the conductor's desk, the sun burst forth from behind a cloud and illumined the scene, while the applause from a densely crowded orchestra and audience resounded on all sides. Staudigl was the Prophet, and Mr. Lockey[1] took the tenor music. "No work of mine," said the composer in a letter written to his brother on the evening of the eventful day, "ever went so admirably at the first performance, or was received with such enthusiasm by musicians and the public, as this." It seems that no less than four airs and four choruses were encored, and the enthusiasm from all quarters was unbounded. Nearly every one in the artists' room afterwards pressed round Mendelssohn to have the honour of shaking his hand and saying a word of congratulation: seldom, in the annals of musical art, had a triumph been more complete. Yet Mendelssohn was not entirely satisfied with his work in its first draft. Before it was finally published by

Birmingham and London Performances

[1] Speaking of Lockey's singing in *Elijah*, Mendelssohn wrote: "He sang the last air so very beautifully that I was obliged to collect myself to prevent my being overcome, and to enable me to beat time steadily" (Grove).


Adagio
Elijah. Draw near all ye people, come to me!
Cres cendo
dim.
Lord God of Abraham, Isaac & Israel
day let it be known that thou art God, and I am thy servant! Lord God of Abraham, O shew to
people that I have done these things according to Thy word! O hear me Lord, and answer
me, O hear me Lord and answer me! Lord God of Abraham, Isaac & Israel, O
Cres cendo

FACSIMILE OF "ELIJAH SCORE.

Simrock, of Berlin, in July 1847, he made considerable—indeed wholesale—revisions in the score. Among these a complete re-writing of the scene with the widow, and the substitution of the trio "Lift thine eyes" (instead of a duet originally) may be mentioned. For the tenth, and alas! the last time, Mendelssohn was in England in April to conduct the *Elijah* at the Sacred Harmonic Society performances, upon one of which occasions, the late Queen Victoria and Prince Albert being present, the Prince wrote the following appropriate note in the book of the oratorio which he had used during the performance:—

"To the noble artist, who, surrounded by the Baal worship of corrupted art, has been able by his genius and science to preserve faithfully like another Elijah the worship of true art, and once more accustom our ear, lost in the whirl of an empty play of sounds, to the pure notes of expressive composition and legitimate harmony—to the great master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception through the whole maze of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements: written in token of grateful remembrance by 'Albert.'

"Buckingham Palace, *April 24th*, 1847."

Shortly after his return to Frankfort, Mendelssohn, naturally in a state of nervous tension following the immense excitement and pressure of work which the years of incessant activity and creative endeavour

unavoidably meant to one of his highly-strung temperament, received a severe shock upon hearing of the sudden death of his favourite sister Fanny (Mrs. Hensel). The summer and autumn saw temporary returns to his wonted health and spirits; but, after two serious attacks of apoplexy, he expired on the 4th November 1847, in his thirty-ninth year. Thus all too soon had "the brilliant flashing steel worn the scabbard," and Felix Mendelssohn had passed, on the very threshold of a glorious prime, into the Spirit World.

Concerning *Elijah*, the work is so familiar to the British public that it seems almost unnecessary to refer to its glorious structure as a tone-cathedral of surpassing strength and beauty, or the marvellous excellence of those many favourite excerpts which are so well known to amateurs and professionals alike. The following description of the overture, from the pen of an eminent writer, cannot well be surpassed:—"The first subject of the Overture indicates a gradual awakening of the nation to the sense of a new calamity. The second begins with a *crescendo* of semiquavers indicating the approach of more intense anguish, the first phrase of *impatience* is woven into this, and the movement is carried on with increasing vehemence until impatience rising to fury, sinks at last into despair, which culminates in the desperate cry of 'Help, Lord!' wrung from the whole body of the apostate people." The old church chant used in the duet with chorus, "Lord, bow

Some Notable "Elijah" Numbers

Thine ear to our prayer," with its quaintly lowered "leading note" (D♮ in key E minor), is full of penitence and supplication. Then follows the lovely tenor solo, "If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me." Nothing more delicate or beautiful has perhaps been penned in real eight-part writing than the exquisite double quartet, "For He shall give His angels charge over thee." Of choruses, to refer to only a few, we might name the melodious fugal numbers, "Blessed are the men," and "He watching over Israel"; the thrilling chain of "Baal" choruses, in which such a vivid scene is mentally depicted; the grand rousing number, "Thanks be to God," as the superb and masterly, "Be not afraid"; and, last but not least, that wonderful piece of descriptive choral writing, "Behold, God the Lord passed by." Of solo work, in addition to that named, it only needs to speak of that restful and delicious aria, "O rest in the Lord"; of the ringing soprano solo, "Hear ye, Israel," the F♯ of which is said to have been specially designed to bring out one of the most magnificent notes of Jenny Lind's glorious voice; the fine tenor number, "Then shall the righteous shine forth"; the grand prayer of the prophet, "Lord God of Abraham," as the subsequent "It is enough," with delicious 'cello obligato, and "Is not His word like a fire," all three of which selections those of us now living will long associate with the vocalism of Mr. Charles Santley; and, not less interesting in their way, as side-lights of a marvellous picture, the short alto *arioso*, "Woe unto them," and the similar bass

fragment, "For the mountains shall depart," with its haunting oboe phrases. Of Choral traces, we may speak of that delicate and dainty quartet, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," and perhaps the concerted vocal portions of the great scene, "O Lord, Thou hast overthrown Thine enemies," in which Elijah sends up a reiterated prayer for rain. Truly, it would be impossible to conjure up a sacred work of modern times that contains so many gems, choral and vocal, all of which we may surely esteem as of imperishable worth. Had Mendelssohn lived to complete his fortieth year, we should probably have had a third oratorio from his pen—namely, *Christus*, upon fragments of which he was busy up to close upon the time of his death. Thus might we have had a grand trilogy of Biblical heroes, the great Hebrew Prophet, Paul the Jewish Convert and Apostle of the Gentiles, and—with all reverence let us speak it—Christ, the Heroic God-man of Nazareth, in whose praise, as is fitting, some of the noblest of Earth Music has been written. To compare, or even contrast Mendelssohn's oratorio work with that of Handel, for instance, were invidious. Each, in his own way, has left us tone-erections of astonishing magnificence, grandeur, and excellence that will surely long be classed among the first musical treasures of the world.

Concerning the work of the famous French composer, Charles Gounod, as a writer of oratorios, much might be said. We must be content with a few passing remarks. When about twenty-eight years of age,

Gounod and Sacred Music

Gounod had serious intentions of entering the priesthood, and his studies at this time resulted in making him a man of earnest religious thought and culture. Later on, after *Faust* had brought him name and fame, we find him ever turning his attention to sacred music; witness the composition of his "Messe Solennelle," his "Stabat Mater," his "Gallia" (a lamentation for France, brought out at Albert Hall, London, May 1st, 1871), and even his beautiful and widely-popular songs, "Nazareth" and "There is a Green Hill." He had always been a great admirer of Schumann, and notably of Berlioz, nor did Wagner's early sermons on operatic reform shake the art world without causing Gounod to think. That such productions as *Paradise and the Peri,* Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, and Wagner's early operas, with their wonderful chains of *leit motiven,*[1] influenced the reflective and keenly analytical mind of the French composer, who was ever more of a student and a thoughtful recluse than a man of the world, can we doubt? As early as 1868, Gounod is said to have sketched out the *Redemption;* but the work was not finished until 1881 for production at the Birmingham Festival of 1882. It was subsequently heard in Paris, May 22nd, 1886. Since then it has become very popular with the British public, and has figured in the *répertoire* of all choral societies of importance. It was followed by a second great sacred work, *Mors et Vita*, called a Tetralogy, from its being laid out in four parts consist-

Influences that led Gounod to write his Oratorios

[1] Representative themes.

ing of a Prologue, a Requiem Mass, the Last Judgment, and Judex (or the Heavenly Jerusalem). This fine piece of tone-imagery, full of majestic and melodious "representative themes," and surpassingly beautiful and refined in orchestration—like its immediate predecessor, the *Redemption*—first obtained a hearing in England, having been produced at the Birmingham Festival of 1885. It has not, perhaps, yet obtained the wide recognition it deserves as a score of remarkable religious thought and striking musicianship.

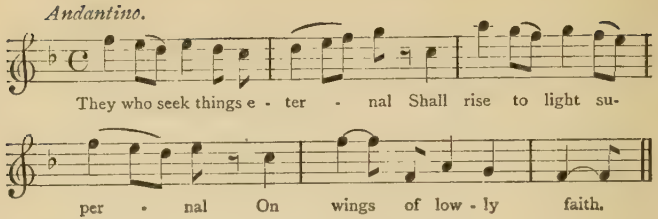
Concerning the *Redemption,* as also with regard to the genius of its author, there are many varied opinions.

The Charm of the "Redemption" Music

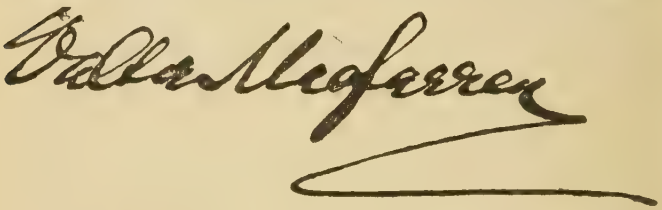
In his work Gounod makes a bold innovation in almost entirely discarding the polyphonic and fugal chorus of his predecessors in oratorio work. His recitatives are most delicately and tastefully coloured by the instrumental accompaniment, and doubtless in this, as in his continuous use of *leit motiven,* the composer was much under the spell of the Seer of Bayreuth. The beautiful *Redemption* theme, which serves as principal material of the opening of the symphony of the first chorus, "The Earth is my possession," is a piece of luscious melody which lingers in the memory with a strange clinging power. We meet it frequently throughout the work—where the Angel hails Mary as "Gratia plena"—where our Saviour prays, "Pardon their sin, my Father"—where the dying thief is comforted with the words, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise"—where the risen Redeemer addresses the holy women

with "All hail! Blessed are ye women"—and notably, like a great pæan of triumph, where it is introduced *fortissimo* in the orchestra at the close of the grand chorus, "Unfold, ye portals everlasting." Strong numbers in the work—numbers we can memorise with strange persistency, so vividly do their symmetry and melody appeal to us—are the thrilling "March to Calvary," with the choral introduction of the old church hymn, "Vexilla Regis"; Mary's lovely and touching solo with harp accompaniment, "While my watch I am keeping"; the exquisite Choral, "For us the Christ," with its rich melodic coda at the words, "Faith unswerving, holy Hope, that unconquered remained, Heavenly Love, ever young; for them thanks do we raise." So far the First Part. The Second Part of the oratorio, based on the divine subjects of the Resurrection and the Ascension, is full of touches of inexpressible charm. As day dawns on the first Resurrection Morn, how beautiful is that rhythmic *Allegretto* on muted strings, ushering in the approach of the three Marys to the Sepulchre! How dramatic the scenes that follow: scenes by the Tomb and in the Sanhedrim which we can almost picture as being enacted before us when we close our eyes and let the music speak to the emotional side of our intellect! Then comes one of the gems of the work, the exquisite soprano solo and chorus, "From Thy Love as a Father." Perhaps seldom has melody been penned more ravishing than that which we quote on the next page (at its second recurrence).

For choral effects—each of a different colour—there



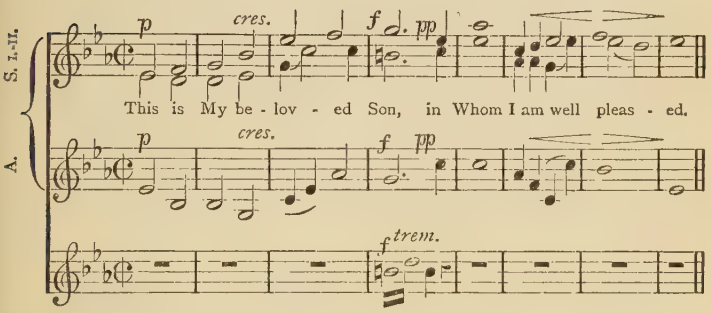
can be few selections named more attractive, as well as impressive, as "Unfold," already referred to; the delicious melodic opening to Part III., "Lovely appear"; and the majestic unisonal start of the Hymn of the Apostles, "The Word is Flesh become." These, and many other traits, make the *Redemption* essentially an oratorio of modern religious thought—a thought which strives to unite the warm and more realistic devotion of the Roman Catholic to the spiritual faith of the Protestant Church.



Taking it as a whole, Gounod's *Redemption* may surely be placed in the same category—if of a varied *genus* of workmanship—with the greatest tone edifices of Handel and Mendelssohn, works which use cannot stale nor years rob of their sublime beauty and solidity of texture.

CHAPTER X.

Chorus scrap from *St. John the Baptist* (G. A. Macfarren).



HOW ENGLISH COMPOSERS WORKED FOR ORATORIO.

Musical influences in the United Kingdom—Eminent British musicians of the day—Sir A. C. Mackenzie's *Rose of Sharon*—Other living British musicians—Bennett's *Woman of Samaria*—G. A. Macfarren's *St. John the Baptist*—Features of the work—Macfarren and Wagnerian influence—Other numbers in *St. John the Baptist*, etc.—Sullivan and sacred music—Sullivan's Preface to the *Prodigal Son*—The music of the *Prodigal Son*.

THE reproach is often uttered that there is no great school of English composers. It would be juster to say that, as yet, no fair opportunity has been given to native talent for the development of such a school.

The great light of Handel's genius, when he reigned supreme in London, perhaps overshadowed a nascent British musical endeavour with the rare gifts of Henry Purcell[1] as its leading exponent. But Great Britain and Ireland have not been without honour in the annals of musical achievement. In the Madrigal, Glee, Anthem, and Church Service we have had many noted names; and the ballad operas of Balfe and Wallace still exercise an apparently undiminished popularity throughout the United Kingdom. In a less obtrusive, if none the less effectual way, British musical art, especially during the latter half of the nineteenth century, has made itself felt in various departments of life and through numerous channels of influence and usefulness. Our great Music Schools, our Musical Guilds, our Cathedral Choirs, our large Choral Societies, our Musical National Institutions—like the Welsh *Eisteddfod*[2] and the Irish *Feis Ceoil*,[3]—and, notably, our great English Festivals—of which more presently—are a very potent and vital means for the spread of musical knowledge and the development and encouragement of local talent.

Musical Influences in the United Kingdom

But we can boast something more. We have had, within the last fifty years, many eminent men at the head of the profession who have done admirable creative work in all departments. If this work appears less brilliant, or not of world-wide acceptance like that

[1] Henry Purcell, 1658-95.

[2] *Lit.*, a sitting of learned men. [3] *Lit.*, festival of music.

of Handel and Mendelssohn, it has, at least, been solid, and worthy of the stability and honour of the land which saw its birth. Among names that we must always associate with admirable creative output and scholarship which does credit to the nineteenth century's British music, we may mention Sir William Sterndale Bennett, Sir George Macfarren, Sir John Stainer, Sir Robert Stewart, and, pre-eminently perhaps, Sir Arthur Sullivan. Of living musicians, it is impossible to speak without laying ourselves open to the abuses of contrast, officious criticism, or undisguised flattery. Three names, however, might be fittingly given herewith, as they may be taken respectively to represent the three sister countries constituting the British school—*i.e.*, England, Ireland, and Scotland. We refer to Sir Hubert Parry, Dr. C. Villiers Stanford, and Sir Alexander C. Mackenzie. Sir Hubert Parry's *Judith*[1] is a work of scholarship worthy the dignity and culture of the respected Principal of the Royal College of Music. Dr. C. V. Stanford has done so much admirable work in all the loftiest branches of composition—as well as in unearthing so many valuable folk songs of his country—that the writer, being a compatriot, would gladly expatiate on his notable achievements on behalf of British music. But for this very reason, lest we appear to be carried away by patriotic enthusiasm, it must suffice to say that, upon the performance of his fine work, the *Three Holy*

Eminent British Musicians of the Day

[1] Birmingham Festival, 1888.

Children,[1] in Dublin by the Dublin Musical Society (under the conductorship of the late Mr. Joseph Robinson), a very profound impression of Dr. Stanford's musicianship was thereby conveyed, the able and dramatic orchestration, as the masterly eight-part writing, being particularly effective. A work of even still greater importance is the composer's *Eden*, concerning which our limitations of space do not permit us to refer to as its many pre-eminent features of interest deserve.

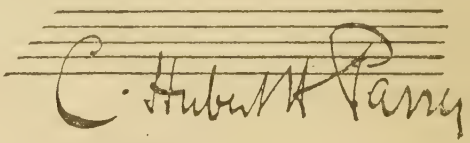
Foremost as champion of the "Renaissance" of British Music,[2] comes Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie, the accomplished and distinguished Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. By kind permission of that eminent exponent of the Scottish school, we are enabled to give the following interesting particulars of how the *Rose of Sharon*[3] came to be written. It was during the final rehearsals at Drury Lane Theatre of his opera *Colomba*, that it was suggested—literally "over the footlights"—to Sir A. C. Mackenzie (the suggestor being Mr. Alberto Randegger) that he should

Sir A. C. Mackenzie's "Rose of Sharon"

[1] Birmingham Festival, 1885.

[2] Mr. Fuller Maitland in *The Music of the Nineteenth Century*.

[3] Norwich Festival, 1884.



write an oratorio for the approaching Norwich Festival. The proposal was accepted at once. The work was written in Florence, where the composer was then residing, the book of words being supplied by the able pen of Mr. Joseph Bennett; and it was during the dog-days of an Italian August that the oratorio was commenced. The first performance at Norwich was an enormous success. The members of the chorus had supplied themselves with roses, with which they pelted the gifted composer! It was altogether an unforgettable scene. The original cast was a particularly fine one: Madame Nevada, Madame Patey, Mr. Edward Lloyd, and Mr. Charles Santley. Later on the work was heard in the Albert Hall, St. James's Hall, and at the Crystal Palace, London; and, since then, it has been given in all the principal cities of Great Britain. In one season, for instance, it had four successive performances in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee, with Madame Albani and Mr. Edward Lloyd in the principal parts. The composer considers the production of the work to have been the "turning point" of his career; and the London performances certainly led to Sir A. C. Mackenzie making the metropolis his home.

It would be gratifying to speak in further detail of our living British musicians, notably of Sir Frederick Bridge, Dr. Frederic Cowen, and Dr. Edward Elgar. But a list of the many who are now doing good creative work among us could never be given with any satisfaction or completeness. Behind the well-known names come the claims of another list—one

which can never be fully measured or estimated—that of the promising geniuses who are at present struggling in vain to win a hearing. It is not impossible that Britain hides a native Handel with Wagnerian ideas of modernity. It is also quite possible that this same Handel-Wagner may not have the resolution, determination, and iron powers of endurance—physically and mentally—that the great Germans had. One instance will suffice. Only a very short time ago we were privileged to see the score of a Passion Oratorio — essentially modern in thought, striking in design, and most musicianly both in its melodic and harmonic development. Performed in a provincial town, it made a profound sensation; but, the composer having small means and less influence, no publisher can be found to accept the work, nor large musical society to give it a metropolitan hearing. That many more similar cases to the one quoted exist, we have, unfortunately, ample evidence. The fact remains, however, that "genius will out." Mr. W. S. Rockstro aptly concludes his admirable article on "Oratorio," in Grove's *Dictionary*, by saying, referring to the need for a few more really good oratorios:—"We do not want many," he says, "but those we have must be of no doubtful excellence. . . . Should a Master arise capable of stepping into that highest place which only a very, very few have occupied before him, we may be sure that he, at least, will find no difficulty in bringing his work to light." Let

Other Living British Musicians

us hope that this may really prove the case, should a true British Handel ever arise.

Apart from criticisms of the work of living musicians, as touching what already exists in the oratorio department, one or two pre-eminent instances must suffice for present analysis and comment. Starting with the compositions of Sir W. Sterndale Bennett, we find in that eminent English composer a refinement and artistic delicacy of colouring which, perhaps, appeal rather to the cultured musician than the ordinary listener. To the earnest student his pianoforte music unfolds, upon deeper acquaintance, beauties of the most lasting and satisfying kind. In the *May Queen*, though fettered by a weak libretto, he has enriched the department of Secular Cantata with a work that is full of charm, melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically, and is also characterised by much tasteful colouring in the orchestration. Some nine years after the production of this work, his oratorio, *The Woman of Samaria,* was heard at the Birmingham Festival. This scholarly composition has a notable introductory movement, in which the Choral and its accompaniment are written in different *tempi,* and the whole shows traces of the composer's devotion to the methods of J. S. Bach. It cannot be said that this fine work is *popular*, in the sense of its appeal to all classes of listeners; but the score will well repay the study expended upon it by thoughtful musicians.

Bennett's "Woman of Samaria"

In Sir George A. Macfarren we meet with an English

musician of rare capacity and astonishing fertility o musical invention. He tried his hand at almost a kinds of composition, and as author, editor, an lecturer he obtained a position of high re spect in the musical world as a man of th widest culture and erudition, as well as o marked creative ability. His first oratorio, *S John the Baptist,* is perhaps the best known o his four oratorios. The text was supplied by Dr. E. G Monk, and the work was originally written for per formance at the "Three Choirs" Festival held at Glou cester in 1872. Owing partly to the fact that th Cathedral authorities objected to the singing in sacre precincts of the secular air, "I rejoice in my youth, it was not given; and to the Bristol Festival Committe of 1873 was reserved the honour of giving a publi hearing to this really fine work. The conductor o this occasion was Sir Charles (then Mr.) Hallé, an the chief artistes were Mesdames Lemmens-Sherring ton and Patey, and Messrs. Edward Lloyd an Santley. The oratorio was received with great en thusiasm; and so gratified were the Committee wit the success achieved that, meeting immediately afte the performance, they subscribed among themselve a sum of one hundred guineas, which was forth with handed to the composer as a recognition of th honour which he had conferred upon British art. I was a graceful tribute, and was well deserved. I was shortly afterwards heard in London; and, upo its production by the Sacred Harmonic Society a

G. A. Macfarren's "John the Baptist"

Macfarren's "St. John the Baptist"

Exeter Hall in 1874, a well-known critic[1] thus refers to the event:—

"Never was success more promptly or more universally acknowledged than that which has bestowed upon Mr. Macfarren the priceless laurel-leaf of a great composer. Not a voice has been raised to dispute it, even amid the clashing opinions and conflicting tastes preeminently distinctive of the musical world. Such agreement is wonderful, and more convincingly than any argument or analysis proves that in *St. John the Baptist* we have a creation of genius."

Features of the Work

There is not the least doubt that the work is full of originality, and a depth of scholarship and power strongly convincing even to those pessimists who do not believe in the musical genius of England. The opening trumpet-call is most effective, and is intended to represent the Schofar summons of Jewish ritual. The distinctive themes, their clever development, and the avoidance of a perfect cadence until the close—suggestive of the long expectancy of the faithful until prophecy be fulfilled; all these points tend to make the overture a striking piece of instrumentation. The opening chorus is majestic and impressive, and embodies a vigorous fugue with a coda leading to a strong climax on the word "curse." The scene with St. John, the people, publicans and soldiers, is then very dramatically narrated after the manner of a musical "Dialogue." An effective solo (bass), "I indeed

[1] Mr. Joseph Bennett.

baptise you with water," follows for St. John; and then succeeds what is popularly considered the gem of the work, the short chorus for female voices in four parts: "This is My Beloved Son."

Concerning this latter number an interesting statement is made by Miss Oliveria Prescott, who was the very intimate friend and amanuensis of the composer:—

Macfarren and Wagnerian Influence

"About his [Macfarren's] *St. John the Baptist* there has been some repetition of the assertion that the setting of the words, 'This is My Beloved Son,' was borrowed from the passage in *Lohengrin* at the Descent of the Grail. I asked him about it, for it troubled me, as I daresay some others of his friends have been troubled. He said, 'I don't know why Wagner should have the monopoly of the harmonies of the violin—for that is the chief resemblance. But as to my borrowing from him, that was impossible: my first possibility of hearing *Lohengrin* was when it was first done in London in such a year (I forget the year), and by that time *St. John* was completed, rejected, and put away in brown paper on the shelf, some time before its first performance. That number, "This is My Beloved Son," was the first one of the oratorio I wrote. I think,' he added, 'it was the suggestion or origin of the whole composition.' I asked him if I might put this account in a little book I was then writing, at a point where I considered it might appropriately come in. No, he would not allow it. 'Not now; but when

I am dead and gone, you may say as much as you like!' I little thought that in a year or two more he would be 'dead and gone,' as he said, and I free to say as much as I had opportunity for. I am not surprised at a resemblance taking hold of people when they considered the almost horror of Wagner's music that the old Professor had. Then the strange coincidence of *poetic* idea: the descent of the Holy Ghost in the one—of the Holy Grail in the other. But I can't help feeling the extraordinary difference; the complicated harmonies of Wagner's, and the simple diatonic chords of the Englishman's music, coupled with the pure quality of the chorus—all women's voices."[1]

Part II. of the oratorio, which opens with the brilliantly-depicted scene of Herod's Court, is, of necessity, rather dramatic in character; but with such good taste and refinement is even the dance episode treated, wherein the daughter of Herodias pleases the King, and, acting upon the prompting of her mother, obtains the execution of the Baptist, that the incongruity of such an element in oratorio (yet see pages 51 to 53, where we spoke of the first oratorio) is scarcely noticeable. Some very scholarly writing, both solo and choral, then follows, not the least remarkable being the final chorus, "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?" The

Other Numbers in "St. John the Baptist," etc.

[1] From a letter of Miss Oliveria Prescott, published in H. C. Banister's *Life of George Alexander Macfarren.*

fugal subject, based on an ascending scale, at the words, "He was a burning and a shining light," is particularly telling, and is intensified by the inversion of the subject towards the close.

St. John the Baptist was followed by *The Resurrection, Joseph,* and *King David;* but, of the four, probably the first displays the best work. It deserves to be more frequently placed in the programmes of oratorio societies than is the case.

Sullivan and Sacred Music

No English musician has won his way so widely with the public as the late Sir Arthur Sullivan. This popularity was no doubt, in a great measure, due to the success of his many comic operas; but, even had these never been written, the composer's unsurpassed song, "The Lost Chord," and the wonderful hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," would have endeared his memory to that large section of listeners which is mainly drawn by beautiful and rhythmic melody. In the higher realms of art, Sullivan has left us his grand opera *Ivanhoe*, and the favourite cantata, *The Golden Legend.* Early in his career, sacred music had undoubtedly attracted him. When a boy in the choir of the Chapel Royal, he had written several anthems, one of which, "O Israel," is published, and is a wonderful composition for the mere child he was then, in 1855. In 1869 his first oratorio, the *Prodigal Son,* was performed at the Worcester Festival, Mr. Sims Reeves taking the tenor part. In 1873 appeared *The Light of the World,* a remarkably fine work, which, no doubt, would be oftener performed

in these countries but for those scrupulous feelings, undoubtedly reverent, which all British audiences evince towards the impersonation of the Saviour, or the too vivid musical representation of His sufferings, on a concert platform. The Leeds Festival of 1880 witnessed the performance of *The Martyr of Antioch,* written to Milman's play on that subject. This impressive work is described as being "between an oratorio and a cantata." Lastly, the public have received with ever-increasing approbation the beautiful cantata which takes for its text the subject-matter of Longfellow's equally beautiful poem, "The Golden Legend," and which was brought out and conducted by the composer at the Leeds Festival of 1886. If Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri* is denominated a profane oratorio, we might imagine the same term, though obviously an inappropriate one in both cases, might be applied to Sullivan's *Golden Legend.* The work is, in reality, one of the finest allegories of the Christian religion that has ever been penned.

As the three latter works, and especially the last, are very frequently heard in Great Britain, it may interest our readers most to examine with us briefly that earliest of Sullivan's sacred compositions, the short oratorio entitled, *The Prodigal Son,* thought out and written before Sullivan had completed his twenty-seventh year. The Preface, penned by the young composer, who chose his own text, seems sufficiently interesting to quote:—

Sullivan's Preface to the "Prodigal Son"

"It is a remarkable fact that the Parable of the Prodigal Son should never before have been chosen as the text of a sacred musical composition. The story is so natural and pathetic, and forms so complete a whole; its lesson is so thoroughly Christian; the characters, though few, are so perfectly contrasted; and the opportunity for the employment of 'local colour' is so obvious, that it is indeed astonishing to find the subject so long overlooked.[1]

"The only drawback is the shortness of the narrative, and the consequent necessity for filling it out with material drawn from elsewhere.

"In the present case this has been done as sparingly as possible, and entirely from the Scriptures. In so doing, the Prodigal himself has been conceived, not as of a naturally brutish and depraved disposition—a view taken by many commentators with apparently little knowledge of human nature, and no recollection of their own youthful impulses; but rather as a buoyant, restless youth, tired of the monotony of home, and anxious to see what lay beyond the narrow confines of his father's farm, going forth in the confidence of his own simplicity and ardour, and led gradually away into follies and sins which, at the outset, would have been as distasteful as they were strange to him.

"The episode with which the parable concludes has no dramatic connection with the former and principal portion, and has therefore not been treated.

"ARTHUR S. SULLIVAN."

[1] But see p. 46, list of Scriptural stories, musically arranged, and performed in the oratory of S. Philip Neri's church.

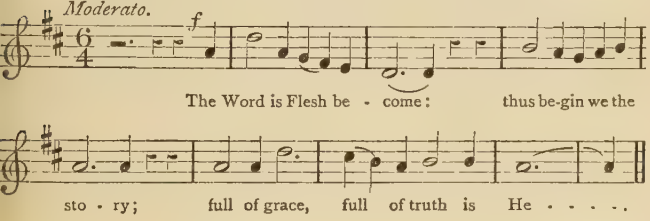
Turning to the music itself, the airy melodious treatment of the Introduction is full of charm, as much from its simplicity of structure, as the flow of its rhythm. A bright chorus, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God," opens the work, the initial phrase being given to the sopranos. After a four-part "Choral" introduction, a briskly-moving fugue subject emphasises the words, "Like as a father pitieth his own children." Then follow tenor and bass solos, full of melody and essentially vocal, for the Prodigal and his father respectively. Characteristic of the revelry implied is the tenor solo and chorus, "Let us eat and drink." A really beautiful song for contralto shortly follows: "Love not the world." This excerpt is perhaps the most popular number of the work, and is frequently heard at sacred concerts. A short but very lovely number is the aria for soprano, "O that thou had'st hearkened to my commandments." The home-returning of the Prodigal is then graphically described, and some excellent, if not particularly profound, vocal concerted work follows, including the fugal chorus, "O that men would praise the Lord"; the beautiful unaccompanied quartet, "The Lord is nigh"; and the final chorus (with a fugue subject on "Hallelujah"), "Thou, O Lord, art our Father." Such, in brief survey, is this short English oratorio, which undoubtedly did much to win fame for the young composer.

The Music of the "Prodigal Son"

Much as we would rejoice to do so, it cannot however be claimed for our composers of the British school that

they have yet rivalled the *universality* in oratorio-writing of Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, or even Gounod. The British composer who can give us a work worthy to be ranked in width of acceptability—to be "all things to all men"—alongside of the *Messiah,* the *Elijah,* or the *Redemption,* has yet to arise and make his genius known. The realm of English music wants not many tone-cathedrals, but it wants one specially of its own architecture—a fitting edifice of glorious sound, inspired by which the thought of the people of our land may be drawn heavenwards. Let us hope that the day be not far distant when we may see not a foreigner but *one of our own* enthroned as Master-Musician of the people.

CHAPTER XI.

Opening phrase of "Hymn of the Apostles" from the *Redemption* (Gounod).

WHAT THE UNITED KINGDOM HAS DONE FOR ORATORIO.

The Birmingham Festival — Notable musical events — The "Three Choirs" Festival — The Handel Festival — Jubilee "Selection" Day (1897)—A plea for the Handel Festival—Chorus-singing in the North of England — The Leeds Festival — National musical institutions — The utility of choral organisations — The place for oratorio performances—Oratorio audiences.

F, as yet, the United Kingdom has not given the world native Handel, it has perhaps done more than any other realm on earth to make the oratorio-music of Handel and his compeers familiar to the people. This, England, in particular, has accomplished in many ways,

but through no channel more effectively than by means of her great musical Festivals, a brief notice of the principal of which, in so far as space permits, we now proceed to give.

The Birmingham Festival

First, without doubt, in importance, comes the great Triennial Festival at Birmingham. It began, like most great undertakings, in quite a modest way; and its organisation, being largely influenced by Handel's example of performing oratorio on behalf of charitable institutions, may be looked upon as one of the many outcomes for good and widespread benefit of Handel's immortal *Messiah*. In 1768, performances of Handel excerpts were given in St. Philip's Church and the King Street Theatre, the proceeds of which were handed over to the funds of the General Hospital. The band on this occasion numbered twenty-five, and the chorus forty. The conductor was Mr. Capel Bond, of Coventry. The close of the eighteenth century saw the regular establishment of a triennial Festival upon vastly enlarged and improved plans. At each recurrent great *Réunion*, the good work, thus unpretentiously begun, grew to still greater developments; and, as succeeding events proved, showed itself capable of possibilities and achievements undoubtedly undreamed of by the originators. Some of the greatest musicians of the time, including Mendelssohn, have occupied the conductor's seat at Birmingham; and well may the famous Iron Capital of Central England be proud of its musical record. The first Festival programme included the

"Dettingen Te Deum," the "Utrecht Jubilate," the "Coronation Anthem," the *Messiah*, *L'Allegro*, and *Alexander's Feast.*

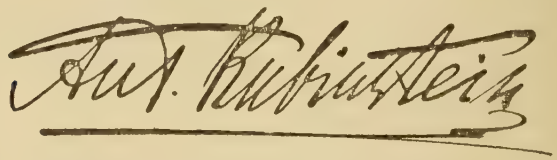
The Birmingham Festival certainly boasts a chronicle of some notable musical happenings. A few will suffice to show the nature of these, all of which are undoubtedly landmarks in the story of Oratorio music. In 1808, Mozart's "additional" accompaniments were heard to the *Messiah* for the first time: without disputing the advisability of keeping to Handel's original scoring, the onward march of modern orchestral music seems to necessitate that eventually such a proceeding would obtain wide approval; the appearance of Mendelssohn as conductor and solo-executant in 1837, when his *St. Paul* was included in the Festival programme; later on, in 1846, the production, for the first time, of the master-oratorio *Elijah*—without controversy, one of the musical triumphs of the century; and lastly, the first hearing of Gounod's *Redemption* in 1882. Of the chronicles of Birmingham within recent years, the time has not yet arrived to speak with impartiality.

Notable Musical Events

We have already hinted at the strong influence which our great Protestant cathedral services, and the training entailed (in the case of boys), have exercised in the musical culture of these islands. As far back as 1724, if not for some time previously, it has been customary for the three choirs of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford to meet, turn about, in each of these three

The "Three Choirs" Festival

cathedral cities, for an annual performance, on a large scale, of a selected programme of the best church and, later on, oratorio music. The regular establishment of these meetings was mainly owing to the fervour and exertions of the Rev. Thomas Bisse, Chancellor of Hereford, whose sermon preached at Worcester in 1726 was a memorable one. It is gratifying to note that, at the start, Purcell's "Te Deum" and "Jubilate" in D was as frequently performed as the similar "Utrecht" morning service of Handel. Oratorios were not, at first, performed in the cathedrals, but in the Shire Halls. In 1759, however, the *Messiah* was given in Hereford Cathedral, and in 1787 *Israel in Egypt* also gained admission to sacred precincts. The conductor of these Festivals is usually the cathedral organist of the place, the other two cathedral



organists acting as organist and pianoforte accompanist. In this way, triennially, each town and its respective organist are pre-eminently associated with the carrying out of the Festival programme. The Festival occupies the greater part of the week, and the best singers of the day are engaged for the solo parts. The proceeds are given to charity; but, when a deficit occurs, this is made good by the stewards, a

large number of gentlemen generously giving their services in this capacity. Among new sacred works produced at the Three Choirs Festivals have been Clarke-Whitfield's *Crucifixion* (Hereford, 1822); Sullivan's *Prodigal Son* (Worcester, 1869); new sacred cantatas by our leading London musicians, and such works as *St. Kevin,* by Dr. Joseph Smith (of Dublin).

The Handel Festival

In 1856 it occurred to Mr. Robert K. Bowley—whose energy and enthusiasm in connection with Sacred Harmonic Society and Crystal Palace musical enterprise will long be remembered — to suggest the commemoration of Handel on the centenary of his death (1859) by a festival performance of some of his works. The idea was warmly supported by the Committee of the Sacred Harmonic Society, as by the Directors of the Crystal Palace Company; and, on the 15th, 17th, and 19th June, 1857, the first "Handel Festival" was held in the Palace, and proved a most gratifying success. The programme consisted of the *Messiah, Judas Maccabæus,* and *Israel in Egypt.* Among the principal artists who took part were Mesdames Clara Novello and Dolby, and Mr. Sims Reeves; the late Sir Michael (then Mr.) Costa acting as conductor. In addition to that fine body of singers known as the Sacred Harmonic Society, over 1000 picked singers were added from London, and, with contingents drawn from the best choral societies and cathedral choirs in the United Kingdom, the entire chorus numbered about 2000. The Com-

memoration Festival of 1859 still further emphasised the fact that the great central transept of the Crystal Palace was well fitted for massive choral and orchestral effects—the grand organ had been erected specially by Gray & Davison for the 1857 performance—and it was resolved accordingly to hold the Festivals henceforth triennially. This has been done ever since, the conductorship of the Festivals having passed to the able *bâton* of Mr. August Manns in 1880.

Jubilee "Selection Day"

Which of us, who have attended Handel Festivals, can easily forget the impression made by our first experience, at all events, of these great events? The massive orchestra, the immense auditorium, the sea of faces, and the centre figure of that wonderfully energetic and enthusiastic *chef d'orchestre* whom we all reverence and admire[1]—these amaze the eye. As for the ear, when such numbers as the "Hailstone" or "Hallelujah" chorus shake the wide expanse of air, who can sit or stand unmoved? The writer's memory dwells, in particular, upon the *Selection Day* of one noted Festival, that of 1897, held in the ever-memorable Jubilee year of the reign of her late beloved Majesty, Queen Victoria. The programme was particularly beautiful and appropriate, and we may perhaps

[1] Mr. August Manns, born, near Stettin, in 1825. Appointed Conductor of Crystal Palace Band, October 14th, 1855, a post which he has held with honour for now nigh upon half a century.

be pardoned for inserting the details of Part I. herewith :—

"God Save the Queen" (Sir Michael Costa's arrangement).
"Coronation" Anthem . . . . *Zadock the Priest*

PART I. (Sacred Music).[1]

OVERTURE . . . . . *Occasional Oratorio*
[One of the finest of Overtures ever written.]
DOUBLE CHORUS . "The Mighty Power" . *Athalia*
[A deeply impressive choral number.]
RECIT. AND ARIA "Sweet Rose and Lily" . *Theodora*
[Touching and truly beautiful in its simplicity.]
RECIT. AND ARIA "O voi dell' Erebo" . . *Resurrezione*
[A powerful bass solo.]
RECIT. AND ARIA "Sound an Alarm" . . *Judas*
[An ever popular tenor excerpt.]
CHORUS . . . "We Hear" . . . *Judas*
[A short, bright choral number.]
DOUBLE CHORUS . "Immortal Lord" . . *Deborah*
[A chorus solemn and dignified.]
ARIA . . "From Mighty Kings" . . *Judas*
[Florid soprano solo of great variety.]
RECIT. AND ARIA "Waft her, Angels" . . . *Jephtha*
[One of the most widely popular of Handel solos.]
ARIA . . "Let the Bright Seraphim" . . *Samson*
[The great triumph of *prime donne.*]
ARIA . . . "Honour and Arms" . . . *Samson*
[A fine martial bass solo.]
DOUBLE CHORUS "Your Harps and Cymbals sound" *Solomon*
[A grand jubilant burst of choral exultation.]

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[1] We omit a secular excerpt. The explanatory comments in brackets are ours, inserted for the help of amateur readers.

A Plea for the Handel Festival

It is manifestly impossible to worthily estimate the value of such a factor in musical life as the Handel Festival. Not only has it brought about the hearing and publication of works of the great Saxon which otherwise would probably have been lost to the world, but it has disclosed, as the late Sir George Grove points out, *new* revelations in already well-known works, such as the trombone parts in *Israel* and *Saul,* the organ part of the latter work, the final chorus in *Belshazzar,* and so on.[1] It has been the habit lately, among "advanced" critics, to animadvert in anything but tasteful terms upon this great enterprise. The best reply to such is:—Do away with the Handel Festival and we will be the poorer by a great influence, a great good, and a noble purpose: rather let it ever continue to flourish in our midst, and, in spite of indifference, apathy, and adverse comments, continue to draw its thousands (performers and listeners) to the well-known Norwood resort. In Mr. Manns—a conductor of the highest capabilities—the works of Handel have found an interpreter whom it would be difficult to rival. He is the right man in the right place; and, with his perennial energies, we must only hope he will be long spared to fill his accustomed post of honour at future Handel Festivals.

Turning to the North of England, we meet with a strong element, perhaps undreamed of by the untravelled Londoner. We refer to the great fondness and aptitude which exists among the people of Yorkshire and

[1] Grove's *Dictionary of Music.*

neighbouring districts for choral singing. In how far this may be an inherited tradition from the dim past, when the Northumbrians were alleged to be famous for their singing in parts—an art said to have been taught them by the Irish monk Colman[1] and his musical clerics from Bangor,[2] North of Ireland—it would be presumptuous for us to say. At all events, in York and Lancashire, we find probably the finest choral material in England, and this not drawn so much from the educated classes as from the masses of the people themselves—that great fusion of Kelt, Saxon, and Norman, whom we may well class under the generic name of Briton.

Chorus Singing in North England

Choral music being an innate tendency of the North Englander, it is not then surprising to find the Leeds Festival organisation to be able to boast one of the finest choruses within the kingdom. The first of these great "Musical Meetings" took place in 1858—almost contemporaneous with the first great Handel Festival. The occasion celebrated was that of the opening of the New Town Hall by the Queen; and a notable feature of the first Festival was the production of Sterndale Bennett's *May Queen,* the composer conducting. Since, the Festivals have been held triennially; and among works brought

The Leeds Festival

[1] Sir Samuel Ferguson quotes authority to prove this point in Bunting's *Collection of Irish Music,* vol. iii.

[2] Bangor—*Ban-chor;* literally, White Choir, so called from vestments of singers.

out for the first time we note Macfarren's *Joseph* and *David,* Sullivan's *Martyr of Antioch* and *Golden Legend,* Dvoràk's *St. Ludmila,* etc. That the Leeds Festival has a strong and ever-increasing sphere of activity before it, none can deny. It is one of the musical forces of the age, and, as such, deserves every support that energy and means can bestow upon it. Space fails us to speak of the Festival work of Bristol and Norwich, both of which have a great history.

National Musical Institutions

Nor are the great English Festivals and the numerous Choral Societies throughout the country the only agencies that tend to musically educate and elevate the people, and enable them to appreciate sacred music in its noblest, the oratorio, setting. The Keltic portion of the population have always been notably musical. In Scotland the *Mod,* in Wales the *Eisteddfod,* and in Ireland, of quite recent institution, the *Feis Ceoil,* draw together, by means of musical competitions and appropriate performances, the musically-inclined from that portion of the people who, through want of fair opportunity or by reason of sheer apathy or disinclination, seldom attend the higher class choral concerts. The institution of an annual competition for cantata work—which may be of either a sacred or a secular character—and notably the great choral competitions inaugurated by these movements, do much to prepare the way for a widespread taste for, and efficiency in, the performance of concerted vocal music of the best kind. In Ireland, for example, contests in part-singing now take place

between "commercial" choirs, the principal great drapery and other business houses each sending a choir drawn solely from their own assistants. That, in the North of Ireland, "factory" choirs have also been formed and induced to compete, speaks volumes for the spread among the masses of a taste for gathering together and blending voices—Nature's musical instruments present, more or less, in all human organisms. That the new century, upon which we have so recently entered, will see still further development and advancement in the musical amelioration of the lives of the people, we must all devoutly hope. Much has been done already;—much yet remains to be done.

The Utility of Choral Organisations

Turning, for a space, from the consideration of large musical organisations, it may not be uninstructive to consider the advantage, to local performers and others, in such institutions. A wide amount of regular employment is, by this means, given to resident musicians who would otherwise have little opportunity for the public exploitation of their talent. This is especially the case with orchestral players, most of whom get fees for their services. Large choruses are, of necessity, mainly amateur, or consist of members who, by small subscriptions, defray current expenses. That such outlay is well spent may be gathered from the fact that it goes to defray the rent of public halls and rehearsal rooms, the purchase of music and musical instruments, as well as giving employment of greater or less value to

printers, bill-posters, even advertising agents, and—reader, forgive the combination—the musical critics of local papers. The conductor of a good choral society finds himself at once in a position of importance and of musical influence. He draws the best pupils of the town; he is consulted upon all matters of musical import connected with the community; and, on all occasions of public musical display or exertion, he finds himself, without need to canvass, placed in a position to command musical matters generally.

The Place for Oratorio Performances

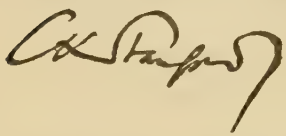
As to the place for the performance of oratorio, opinions differ widely. While some favour a sacred edifice, others prefer the public concert-hall. Much may be said for and against either place. If the cathedral appears an ideal place for the rendition of Handel's *Messiah,* it is exclusive to a certain extent, and in many by-paths of sacred music it is largely prohibitive. If the concert-hall is open to none of these objections, to some the mere accessories of evening dress and a society gathering seem incongruous with the true spirit of oratorio music. Into none of these scruples do we feel qualified to enter. We have probably not yet reached the ideal method of performing oratorio. Wagner, to render his chain of "Ring" operas aright, had to build an opera-house to precisely suit his purpose. Probably oratorio needs a building and conditions of performance specially suited to it. A hint for future enterprise might be drawn from the past, in which we find that Neri used neither the chapel nor the

concert-hall, but the *Oratory* for the presentation of his early musical dramas; and that the Miracle and Mystery Plays of mediæval times were never so popular as when given upon erections specially devoted to them in market squares and open places. If the organisers of oratorio performances could shake aside stereotypism, and aim at having all accessories in keeping with the rendering of "sacred dramas without action," the oratorio might become as great a power in the religious-emotional life of the people as was once the Morality and Scripture Plays. There is nothing new under the sun, and reforms keep recurring in circles. That there is a latter-day tendency to dramatise the oratorio seems evident to thinking minds. Within very recent years religious plays have been performed on the stage, witness Wilson Barrett's *Sign of the Cross.* If Religion has crept into Drama, why not the converse? We are on the borderland of change. Let us trust it may be great, salutary, and widespread in its beneficial effects.

Oratorio Audiences

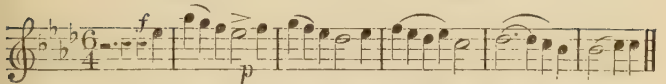
Concerning oratorio audiences, a few words must suffice. The etiquette which suppresses applause, and the custom of rising at the "Hallelujah" chorus, are indications that audiences innately look upon oratorio as something of a different type from the ordinary choral or other concert. Perhaps the spirit of "listening devoutly" might be still more earnestly cultivated than it is. The habit of arriving late, as of leaving before a performance is over, is to be criticised upon all occasions—save where very special circumstances alter cases. It seems particularly

objectionable in oratorio. The writer never felt more mortified—almost conscious of impiety—than upon one occasion, when arriving after the *Messiah* overture had commenced, it was necessary to wait outside a concert-hall door until the conclusion of the movement, and then make way, as quietly and unobtrusively as possible, to a seat, amid a flurried crowd of other late-comers and a much-besieged body of stewards, while the solo tenor stood silently on the platform looking unutterable things, and the conductor glared angrily round—as he was no doubt justified in doing—before his *bâton* fell for the first tranquil chords of "Comfort ye." To err thus once is certainly never to repeat the offence. As grievous, perhaps, is it to see the stream of people who rise to their feet when the first chord of the grand "Amen" chorus falls upon their ears, apparently looking on it as a signal for beating a hasty retreat in order to be first at cloak-room scrambles, or so as not to miss certain trains, or suppers at stated hours. There are, of course, cases where absolute punctility in attendance and departure are impossible; and, without doubt, some oratorio performances are of undue length. To remedy this, it may not be improbable that the oratorio of the future will be shorter. Meanwhile, *we who listen* must only do our best to "give none offence"—particularly not to the spirit of sacred music which breathes around us.



CHAPTER XII.

Fragment of *Parsifal* theme (Wagner).



(The belief lives, the dove hovers, the Saviour's sweet messenger.)

OUR CHORAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE POSSIBLE FUTURE OF ORATORIO.

The growth of British choral societies—The church choir the nucleus of the oratorio society—The secretary and conductor of an oratorio society — The oratorio chorus — Music for oratorio performances —The shelving of native composers — What is, what was, and what is to come—What will be the future of oratorio?

The Growth of British Choral Societies

We have seen how notably and worthily celebrated are our great British choral organisations, whose staple *raison d'être* is oratorio work. These outlets for the noblest outputs of the greatest composers are surely institutions of which the British people may be justly proud. It is also cause for congratulation that, according to the most recent and well-defined statistics, Choral Unions and Societies are steadily on the increase. At first confined only to great towns or

centres of musical enterprise, the tendency for a body of mixed voices—consisting of the professional and amateur element alike—to foregather at regular intervals for the practice and performance of the best concerted vocal music, has extended to nearly every place of importance in the United Kingdom. In the large cities also, where there was perhaps but one musical society in existence less than fifty years ago, several others, offshoots or independent of the main body, have a fair *clientèle* of supporters and have done useful work, the full value of which, as a factor of musical education, it is impossible to estimate too highly. It is true that many of these societies have had but a mushroom existence. They have risen into being through the efforts of one or two enthusiasts, and for a time they have been apparently in a flourishing condition. Then a season comes when there is a marked falling off of interest both on the part of performers and the public; and, finally, after a few heroic struggles—if there be even one leader of enthusiasm left in the management—the combination practically disbands itself, and after a few speculative comments on the part of friends and enemies, oblivion shrouds all so completely that, in less than a twelvemonth, even the name as well as the aims and objects of the defunct choral union are forgotten! It reminds one sadly of that most pathetic of all human occurrences—a child-life cut off before the prime, or even adolescence, is reached. As we know not the why or the wherefore of the latter, so, it may be, we know not the why

or the wherefore of the former. Organisers of such ephemeral choral enterprises are often blamed; oftener the public is censured for indifference; still more often "circumstances beyond control" are quoted as the causes that militated against success and finally led to dissolution. Wiseacres talk of "the survival of the fittest"; but the battle is not always to the strong. Instead of regretting such apparent "failures," the optimist will remember that no healthy impulse, no worthy ardour in a good cause, is expended quite in vain. At least, in these abortive choral undertakings, many pleasant rehearsals have been spent, useful experiences gained, and some listeners and performers have been more or less benefited thereby. This being so, we are perhaps justified in concluding that the more musical *réunions* and organisations the better, especially if *entrepreneurs* conduct them on straightforward and artistic lines. As the writer has had some interesting past experiences, both as to the organisation and keeping together of choral societies, a few hints, given in all deference to those whose ideas differ on these matters, may now be offered for the help of prospective conductors or others who may have the wish, or be laudably ambitious, to bring the noblest choral—notably oratorio work—home to the people.

Given the desire to start an Oratorio Society, the most convenient, as well as the most adaptable nucleus to begin with, is the church choir. In London the "mixed" choir (mainly amateur) is mostly unknown,

save in Nonconformist churches: in the provinces it is one of the strongest of factors in almost every parish of importance. In country districts this is especially the case. Particularly in the winter season, the choir practice is one of the events of the week. Our rural cousins do not object to wind and weather as we townsfolk so often do, spite of our many convenient modes of conveyance. So it happens that musical young men and maidens—principally of the sturdy farmer class—will walk miles through mud and inclement elements to enjoy the weekly rehearsal of chants, hymns, and anthems for Sunday services. A good organist has a weighty responsibility upon his shoulders. If he be lazy or half-hearted, and simply look upon his work as a means of supplementing his income, he will rush through the practice hour, congratulating himself that, if all that *has* to be done is put through "somehow," he has performed his duty. The result of this class of endeavour has a most pernicious, in fact paralysing, effect upon a choir. The bright and energetic members are disheartened and do not put out the best that is in them: the less brilliant do worse than their worst. With professional choir members, the accurate preparation of their work is, of course, a business; with the amateur it is different. Unless an earnest effort on the part of choir master or mistress be made to really interest the choir, utter indifference as to rendition, as well as falling off in attendance, are the inevitable results.

The Church Choir the Nucleus of an Oratorio Society

A better man, and a better musician, is he who, being fully qualified to do so—for we are not now considering incompetent organists and choir-trainers—aims, first, at having the musical services for which he is responsible rendered as devoutly and artistically as possible; and who, secondly, takes the trouble to study the wishes and requirements of those under his direction, so as to make them willing as well as able assistants in the worthy performance of suitable sacred music. The very best-intentioned choir find the usual routine of practising a plain church service—wherein even anthems are seldom allowed—somewhat monotonous. The more cultured musicians wish to get beyond the simple choral or chant; the better readers pine to try their skill at something unfamiliar and even intricate. To meet these pardonable aspirations, a wise organist will always endeavour to have an occasional novelty whereby to vary the beaten track of each practice; and even if this extra item be not included in what *must* be done, all the better. When the ordinary Sunday programme has been carefully and conscientiously gone through, a "second course," consisting in "trying over" some well-written anthem or sacred chorus, is very acceptable to a good choir's palate. If the chorus chosen be a selection from some well-known oratorio, it naturally leads to others being rehearsed from the same work. As acquaintance is made with every new number, the interest of conductor and members of the choir increases. Ten minutes, at the conclusion of a church practice, seems scarcely suf-

ficient time to do justice to even one of such a store-house of treasures: somebody suggests that an evening in the week be specially set apart for the sole rehearsal of oratorio music; another thinks that a neighbouring school-house or town-hall could be easily secured for rehearsals if all who took part paid a small subscription towards cost and the remuneration of the conductor, etc.; a third, maybe, shows willingness to act as hon. secretary *pro tem.*, and set things going. And thus are sown the seedlings which, with due care and enterprise, will give rise to the formation of a local Oratorio Society.

The work of organisation definitely begins when the Hon. Secretary assumes office. The task of this personage in any, but particularly in a first-class musical organisation, is no sinecure. If the projected oratorio society is successfully launched, much of the credit should be given to the secretary, especially if he be more than a mere figure-head at the helm.

The Secretary and Conductor of an Oratorio Society

From the Conductor, special, in fact sterling, qualifications are expected. A musical degree does not make a musician; but it is a reliable guarantee that a musician, already made, has been over a well-designed course of severe study which embraces thorough acquaintance with the laws of classical composition, historical knowledge, and analytical acquaintance with the chief choral and instrumental scores of the great masters. The conductor of an oratorio society requires to have covered this ground fully, and even

to have attained to something more. He needs to be a musician of wide experience, and, if possible, of travel; an observer of men and things; and, above all, a gentleman of good address, determination, judgment, discreet ardour, and generous and devout principles. The pity is that occasionally one must witness the anomaly of the *Messiah* performed under the *bâton* of an utterly indifferent and irreverent conductor; the *Elijah* carried through with a gruffness and lack of enthusiasm totally out of keeping with the temperament of the composer; and the *Redemption* rendered in a "theatrical" style, glaringly inappropriate to the solemnity of the Central Figure of that great religious drama. The responsibilities of and demands upon the culture and intelligence of the conductor of a good oratorio society are certainly great; and none but our foremost men of eminent standing are really fitted to fill such a post.

The Oratorio Chorus

As oratorio work makes special demands upon a chorus, the members of that body need to be worthily endowed both as vocalists and musical theorists. Even the possession of a good voice and ear is not a sufficient recommendation for such membership; these should also be combined with fairly developed faculties of "reading at sight," the understanding of and ability to sympathetically render expression marks, and accurate senses of time and tune. A harsh voice, or one of uncertain intonation, renders the singing of *piano* choral music a well-nigh impossibility; while the suc-

cess of an entire performance has often been spoiled by a careless singer coming in at a wrong "lead." The utmost wisdom and discretion has to be exercised by the conductor in his choice of voices, particularly for oratorio work; as such delicately-scored choruses as Mendelssohn's "He, watching over Israel" are often completely spoiled by indifferent interpretation.

Music for Oratorio Performances

Concerning the music to be performed at oratorio societies, it is to be hoped that the Appendix, entitled "List of Principal Oratorio Composers and their Works," will be found of some assistance. Every effort has been made to render it as complete and comprehensive as possible, though the difficulty of doing so will be readily understood by our readers, from whom and all living composers we ask indulgence if, inadvertently, any important work or its writer has been unintentionally overlooked. A season's oratorio programme should be as varied as possible; and we feel sure native musicians will sympathise with our suggestion that it should include, as often as practicable, a work from the pen of a British composer. The occasional inclusion of motets, masses, anthems, or sacred cantatas in the season's scheme is advisable; for, partly from, and alongside with, such works did oratorio march to its ultimate development.

We have before hinted, in passing, at the fact that much native talent, in the higher realms of musical composition, lies hidden for want of opportunity for production. It is an open secret that, apart from

powerful influence, no large work of a British composer can gain a hearing unless heavily guaranteed or personally financed. This is an ugly truth, but nevertheless it is the case, as all *impresarii* can attest. The *entrepreneur* is not altogether to blame. The production of new works has always in it a certain risk. What we really want is a national fund for the bringing out of the most original work forthcoming, no matter from what source so long as it be genuinely native. Every young composer of ambition tries his hand at oratorio; and many university "acts" are yearly developed into large scores, only to be pigeon-holed by the hundred. The pessimist, who does not believe in the musicianship of his own country, may think we exaggerate. Secretaries of the great Festival Societies could enlighten us, if warranted to speak. We have referred to one unknown work already. Another, of unquestionable excellence, published at the personal expense of the composer, and recommended by the highest musical authorities, has gone the round of the Festival Committees to be told that only the *Messiah* and *Elijah* draw. Other instances could be multiplied. The pity of it! We badly want a nursing institution for native musical creative art.

The Shelving of Native Composers

And now, having endeavoured (in a very unpretentious manner, we are aware) to trace the "Story of Oratorio" from its earliest beginnings, touching briefly upon its progenitors, the Mass and the Miracle Play; its birth in "L'Anima ed il Corpo" of Cavaliere; its adolescence, fostered by the Protestant Choral; its glorious prime

under the treatment of J. S. Bach and Handel; and the first-fruits of a rich maturity in the matter of orchestral colouring beneath the magic brushes of Haydn, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Gounod—we face a question of grave importance—What will be the future of the great Tone-Cathedral? Will we live to see erections of newer and more excellent designs; or will Time, "the Great Destroyer," at length impair the skilled masonry, cause the noble columns to totter on their foundation, shake the "storied" windows in their casements, and silence for ever, with the dust and decay of the ages, the grand organ tones that have so long thrilled many hearts as mere speech could never have done? Gloomy indeed would be the outlook if our sacred Edifices of Sound, acquaintance with which has so often raised our souls heavenwards, were to crumble to earth as did the temples of the ancient world, or even the lordly castles of our feudal ancestors.

What is, What was, and What is to come

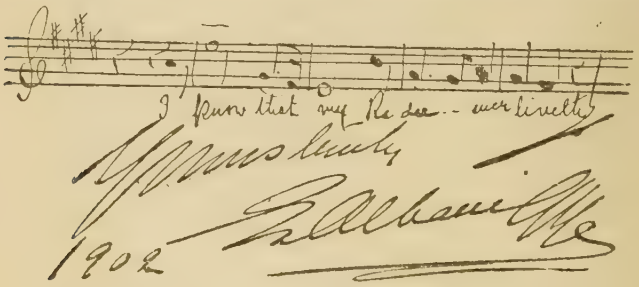
But our tone-cathedral, the oratorio, is made of stouter stuff than wood and stone. Against these wind and rain prevail; but *the air* wars not with its own essence, and music is literally, as well as figuratively, *ethereal*, since it has its appreciable manifestations in the very air-vibrations themselves. If *Spirit* itself be compared to the *wind* which "bloweth where it listeth," then perhaps the voice of things spiritual—and therefore immortal—may be conveyed to us in that mysterious and wonderful Sound Language which, from the Lul-

laby to the Dead March, is with us from the start of this fitful mundane existence until its close or "passing," when the soul goes whither Harmony reigns supreme. Spirit itself must indeed cease to exist when a divine melody like "I know that my Redeemer liveth," or the "Hallelujah" chorus, shall no longer thrill our hearts and raise them to things invisible, eternal, and that pass not away!

But, ere we conclude these pages, the burning question still faces us: What will be the *future* of Oratorio? In our great choral societies, musical combinations, and monster festivals, it is impossible to shut our eyes to the fact that these islands hold within them the best means in the world for the product of the greatest of oratorio work. Whither are composers tending in this direction? We can scarcely now go back to the fast-bound rules of the old contrapuntal school once we have tasted the sweets of liberty in the matter of chordal progression, and have trodden the threshold of the inexhaustible mine of the orchestral colouring of the future. In many cases the oratorio is a *drama without action,* just, perhaps, as Wagner's *Parsifal* is an oratorio with all the added realism of stage accessory. Will the secular once more give of its best to intensify and make more human to us the sacred? Will pulpit and stage again be combined, as was the case in the Mystery and Miracle Plays of yore, and is still an observance, periodically, at Ober-Ammergau? That we are treading upon the borders of a great change in the higher musical

What will be the Future of Oratorio?

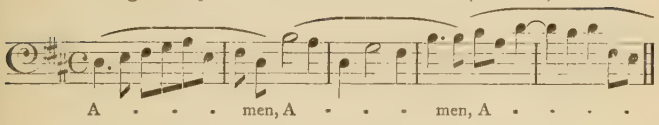
forms seems evident to the thoughtful observer. Wagner can scarcely have said the last word in opera. While Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* mark, each, a glorious achievement, it would be presumptuous to say that either bars the path to further advancement in the higher realms of musical thought. If Wagner ingrafted spiritual things upon the dramatic tree, may we not look for a future creator of Tone Forms who may still further *humanise* oratorio? To peer farther into the mysteries that ever tend to link flesh with spirit would be, perhaps, sacrilege at present. For the soul's complete emancipation—when



surely music, in its most exalted forms, will be fully appreciable by *all*—we must only wait for that day when the blind shall have vision, and the deaf hearing. No longer then shall we see "through a glass darkly," but "face to face"; and to the musician no promise concerning the Restitution of All Things seems so remarkable as the prophecy which declares that, in those days, "the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

CHAPTER XIII.

Fugue subject from "Amen" Chorus (*Messiah*).



THE BUILDING OF THE CATHEDRAL.

Musical forms (instrumental)—Symphony—Concerto—Dance Music—Sonata—Vocal forms—The Overture—Lulli—Handel—Recitative, *secco* and *accompagnato*—The Aria: its triune form—*Messiah* examples—Chorus work—Division of voices—Choruses, *vigorous* and *free*—The "fugued" chorus—Other types of chorus.

We venture to believe that many of our readers, having perused our Story of Oratorio so far, may, being of an analytical and inquiring turn of mind, want further information as to the general structure of the Great Tone-Cathedral—its architectural design, as also the nature of the mortar, bricks, stone-work, and adornments that go to make its masonry. For these students of Form and Construction, and especially for those who themselves desire to become masons, this and the following final chapter are written. So those whom the "story" does not tempt to deep investigation may part company

with us now, if they please. But may we hope that, having given patient attention so far to the narrative, the few remaining pages may at least be scanned cursorily by all; or else kept for future reference in case a deeper interest grows with more intimate knowledge of the greatest triumphs of the Master-Architects of Music.

We have pointed out, in an earlier chapter (see p. 12) that the "forms" of opera and oratorio correspond.

Musical Forms (Instrumental)

It may now be asked, what is meant by *form—i.e.*, "form" in musical composition? By material vision we are accustomed to judge things by their size and shape: we even form our likes and dislikes accordingly; and, as there is no accounting for tastes, a quaint if trite saying has it, "every eye forms its own beauty." Since the magic brush of Dutch painters has invested dull landscapes and the furrowed face of old age with a charm and spirituality hitherto undreamed of, may it not be that in "all that hath form" there dwells an innate loveliness and lovableness of its own, could we but have insight to discover it? Even language has its "forms": we have the neat epigram, the witty, wise, or learned "saw," the letter (business, chatty, sharp, or sympathetic), the speech, the essay, the poem, the book. Similarly in music, the great Language of the Soul's Emotions, we have infinite forms whereby to convey the message of mind to mind by the medium of periodic sound. In the "Symphony," the whole orchestra tells its story in three or four movements

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy

From the original Bust by Peter Hollins, in the City of Birmingham Art Gallery.

of contrasted speed and expression. Hence we have therein the opening *Allegro* of brisk and energetic pace and well-defined melodic themes; the placid *Andante,* or solemn-sombre *Adagio,* redolent of peace, pathos, meditation, or sadness; the naïve *Minuet,* or the rollicking *Scherzo,* full of tender gaiety and the lively mirth of youth; and, lastly, the final *Allegro Rondo,* or *Presto,* the brilliant "wind-up," the climax, the "last word"—that which will, or will not, arouse the plaudits of the audience, and may, or may not, elicit the remark: "What a fine work! how impressive, scholarly, and wonderful!" The "Concerto" we may briefly define as a symphony for one solo-instrument with orchestral accompaniment; the "Sonata" is a symphony for solo-instrument *without* accompaniment; and the "Overture" is an abbreviated orchestral symphony, in that it consists usually of the first (Allegro) movement only, or is a short tone picture of the work that is to follow. In Dance Music we have the various forms of the lively Courante and stately Sarabande, etc.; as also of the well-known waltz, polka, jig, and reel. In Chamber Music we have the trio, quartet, quintet, etc., being "symphonies" for three or more solo-instruments playing *ensemble.* Again, in Pianoforte Music proper, we have a *portraiture* of all these forms under the generic name of "piece"—which may be an *Allegro* movement, tone poem, or dance measure, or all three under the term *Sonata.* The variety of *pieces*

Symphony

Concerto

Dance Music

Sonata

is infinite, and literally ranges "from the cradle to the grave"—hence we find therein represented the Berceuse, the March, and the Elegy. Truly music is with us always — part of the air we breathe, a part of the very life that is in us.

Turning to the realm of Vocal Music, an *embarras de richesse* greets us. We have the Recitative, the Aria, the Duet, the Chorus, etc., with their myriad species; and, in less severe classical garb, we possess the Ballad, Folk-Song, and *Chanson d'Occasion*—even the music-hall song or pantomime ditty forming a potent, if not always elevating factor among the musical influences of the masses. But under the wide roof-trees of dramatic music (sacred and secular) we find congregated all the noblest members of the great family of vocal forms; and to these principally now, with a view to the illustration of the construction of our subject-matter, Oratorio, we would direct the reader's earnest attention. Suppose, then, at this stage, we ask those whose eyes and minds have tolerated the scribe so far, to take from their music-shelves once more the King of Oratorios, the *Messiah*, and from this immortal score let us mark, learn, and inwardly digest what it can teach us of "musical form." We make no apologies for again selecting the *Messiah*. "Use cannot stale its infinite variety." It is a work, as has been before remarked, for all time and for all men. To please the *blasé* critic and connoisseur, we might have selected *Saul* or *Theodora*, but as these works are neither often heard nor generally

Vocal Forms

available to the one who running reads, we choose the old paths of familiarity and fast affection, knowing that all can walk therein with ease.

Glance, first, at the Overture with its solemn (*grave*) Introduction and fugued *Allegro Moderato*. An overture is, as its name implies, an opening. It is like a call to order—a request that the company may be silent and hold themselves in mute attention for what is to follow. Evidently the early composers of opera and oratorio looked upon it in this light; for primitive overtures were little more than introductory series of chordal progressions preceding the rising of the curtain or the start of the sacred narrative. But this prelude was, ere long, destined to have a career of its own, and even to stand alone on its own merits; witness the concert overtures of Mendelssohn, and the many popular excerpts from the great oratorios and operas which we so frequently see figuring, apart from their connections, on concert programmes of the day. It was reserved for Lulli (1633-87), the first great composer of French opera, to give the overture the dignity of a distinct movement. The "Lulli" overture usually opened with a short slow movement in common time, generally marked for repeat, and leading easily into a brisk, bright fugue, the coda (or close) of which often suggested a reminiscence of the solemn start. This model is precisely followed by Handel in the overture to the *Messiah*. In the slow movement surely we see the awe and

The Overture

Lulli

Handel

grandeur of the subject which the composer proposed to treat,—a theme no less majestic than—let us say it reverently—the *Son of God*. In the short, energetic *allegro*, its bright yet pathetic minor theme ever marching on triumphantly through the mazes of a simple yet persistently obstructive counterpoint, might we not figure the soul of man, fettered and oppressed on all sides with circumstances over which he has no control save what his own unconquerable will can exercise but which eventually, like the "all things that work together for good," bring him to a triumphant end. Thus the final cadence, even though the minor key gives it the gloom of death, may be imagined to speak of the rest and peace that God alone can give, and that cometh truly to all, e'en though it come but through the pale portal of the tomb.

Recitative, Secco, and Accompagnato

We have spoken before of the wonderful solacing effect of those initial (iterated) major chords in the instrumental opening to the recitative "Comfort ye." Now we need only add that they seem like the promise of life and youth and bliss coming immediately after the sombre closing chord of the overture—a minor common chord on E in the dull, medium register of the gamut. Ernst Pauer[1] happily defines Recitative as "a form of expression belonging to dramatic music, and occupying a position between declamation and actual singing." Recitative is of various kinds, and ranges really from the intonation, or

[1] Primer on "Musical Forms."

'pitching" of the voice, which good orators use, to such a recitative as this "Comfort ye" by Handel, which is technically described as *accompagnato* (accompanied), and differs very little from melodic song. The *secco* (dry) recitative is well illustrated in the short scrap that follows the promise of pardon for iniquity. Interspersed between the words, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," etc., come short, sharp, *staccato* chords. These, musicians know, are not played in strict time as written, but serve rather to come in at the cæsuras, or pauses, of the declamation. They give breathing places to the singer, and would, in the case of a long or chromatic passage, help to keep the voice *in tune* with the tempered scale. In regard, specially, to the recitative "Comfort ye," its tenderness and beauty can scarcely be exaggerated by praise. Within the compass of thirty-seven bars it gives instance of the *accompagnato* and *secco* styles; and, at the same time, the entire appropriateness of the words to their specific treatment is above either criticism or compliment—it is the work of genius.

In "Every valley shall be exalted" we meet with an instance, somewhat modified, of the "Grand Aria," so called. To trace the history of the Aria is exceedingly interesting, but our space limitations preclude all but the briefest summary. Aria first simply meant a song, a tune, or, as we freely translate it, an air. This meaning attached to it well up to the end of the seventeenth century; though, in Handel's youth, the Grand (operatic) Aria

The Aria

was in existence in Italy in all its glory. The *form* of the Grand Aria is really that known to the musical student as "Sonata form"—that is to say, we have a first principal phrase (or subject) and a second principal phrase, usually in tonic and dominant keys respectively. These phrases follow each other, are generally of a contrasted character, and lead, by episodes[1] and modulation,[2] to a "close" on the dominant, followed by a "double bar and repeat." Then comes "the middle phrase," a kind of intercalary matter which, in instrumental music, serves for the "working out" or development of themes; but, in song-form, it more often offers a kind of relief or variant to the melodic themes already used. This "second part" is almost like the wait between the acts: it rests the mind and yet sharpens expectancy for what we know is to follow—a resumption of the principal themes leading to a brilliant, effective, or subdued full close. The third part of the Grand Aria is then mainly repetition—in some cases entirely so, when, as is often the case, Part I. ends with a tonic and not a dominant close. This is the skeleton plan of the Grand Aria; but, in clothing it, Handel asserted his right to rearrange, contract, and enlarge. In "Every valley" he has favoured rather "word-painting" than form-

Its Triune Form

[1] The *musical* episode may be defined as a connecting link between the chains of principal themes or subjects; just as an episode in life although apparently a separate happening, in reality fills a gap or bridges over a space in one's history.

[2] Modulation is the passing from one key, or scale, to another.

slavery: the valley and the mountain are ever with us; and long after the voice has sung the final matchless phrase, we hear (and feel) "the crooked (shall be) straight and the rough places plain." In "Rejoice greatly," however, the great Saxon took Aria form and bent it brilliantly to suit his purpose. The intelligent student will, no doubt, be able to trace the tonic and dominant themes, with close on dominant (without repeat), leading to a "middle phrase" redolent of the key of the relative minor. The jubilant "Rejoice" theme re-enters finally; and, instead of a hard and fast repetition, we have a magnificent burst of florid jubilation which it is the ambition of every soprano to trill forth in all its ecstatic glory. How few ordinary singers, alas, ever quite come up to our expectations from the written text! Seldom are the florid passages, even in the case of the most eminent singers, rendered with perfect evenness, free from uncertainty or inaccuracy of intonation. Only an unerring violin might perhaps, in the hands of an expert, accurately intone this angelic song, and even then it would lack the soul of the singer. In the *Messiah,* arias of almost every type and variety may be found. Fine instances of the "triple" division referred to—first part, second part, and repeat—will be found in "He was despised" (for contralto), and "Why do the nations." How our hearts melt at the one and throb at the other! An aria, with prominence given to the second part, may be seen in "But who may abide the day of His coming." Pre-eminence of the

"Messiah" Examples

principal theme and rhythm characterises "O Thou that tellest good tidings." The simplicity of the *Cantabile*[1] aria impresses us most in "He shall feed His flock," "Come unto Him," and "How beautiful are the feet." In "I know that my Redeemer liveth," while *form* requirements may be clearly traced, we bow to the skill of the master-architect, and forget that "middle phrases" and "repetitions" exist. And yet what design, what ethereal sequence, what majestic unity of conception and its evolution! Let us marvel as we admire, and call this a cherub's song of calm and heavenly joy—melody and words that lift us out of sordid earth surroundings to another, brighter, and better sphere.

Coming to examine chorus-work, the great columns of the Tone-Cathedral fill us with wonder and amazement.

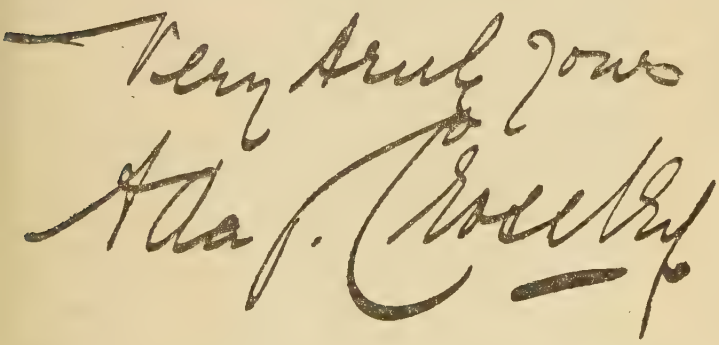
Chorus Work

In chorus-singing many voices combine to convey one well-defined sentiment. In the days of ancient Greek drama the members of the chorus probably *intoned* their parts: they acted mainly as narrators or commentators of the plot of the action. Considering, first, the kinds of voices used in chorus-work, we find these to be roughly classed into four departments—soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass—the first two consisting of women (or boy) singers, and the others of male vocalists. Allowing for the lowest (practical) limit of the bass voice to be G on the first line of the bass stave, and the highest (safe) available note for the soprano to be G on the space above the

[1] *Lit.*, in a singing style.

fifth line of the treble stave, we thus have a vocal range (for ordinary voices) of exactly three octaves. Within this compass the vastest variety of harmonic combination is possible. Multitudinous, also, are the modes of grouping voices: there are four (or more) part choruses for women's voices only, in which case first and second sopranos and altos come into requisition, and similarly with male voices; sopranos and altos may sing in unison against a unison counterpoint of tenors and basses, thus forming a two-part chorus; or the entire body of singers may be divided

Division of Voices



into two parts and treated as a double choir, in which case the highest talents of the great composer are brought into play if he aspire to write in eight real parts, or balance choir with choir as did the giants of chorus-work, Bach and Handel. Again, chorus-singing may be entirely in unison; or it may be, at

the will of the creative artist, subdivided into any number of vocal parts, eight being the general limit (though Tallis has written for *forty!*), and four (S.A.T.B.) being the most usual division of labour.

Considering the construction of the chorus itself, we find a great variety of forms. In the matter of composition most theorists speak of the *rigorous* and the *free*. By the former is implied that choral writing which depends upon fugue, canon, or counterpoint—or all three devices—for its outlay; by the latter is meant the melodic, choral, and dramatic (or descriptive) chorus. All these types, and many modifications of them, may be traced in the *Messiah*. In such grand fugal numbers as "And the Glory," "And He shall purify," "For unto us a child is born," "And with His stripes," etc., etc., we have instances of the great classical "rigorous" chorus, yet flowing, from Handel's immortal pen, with all the spontaneity, power, and grandeur that he knew so well to throw into his choral writing. The majority of Handel's choruses are, indeed, more or less "fugued"—*i.e.*, they depend upon the contrapuntal development of one principal subject after the acknowledged laws of the Fugue, which laws are too numerous and technical to quote *in extenso* here. J. S. Bach also favours the "rigorous" style in chorus-writing; Mendelssohn, and many other minor oratorio composers, have followed in the footsteps of these great masters. After all, nothing gives each voice so fair a "chance" as the Fugue: in this form of composition each part takes up,

Choruses; Rigorous and Free

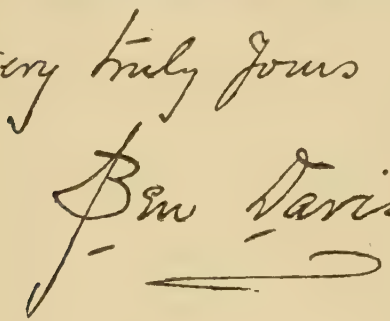
turn by turn, the "subject," or its transposed counterpart (the "answer"), and so all have an opportunity of "singing the tune"—for a fugue is really a melody appearing alternately in various vocal parts. We are accustomed to hear fugues voted "dry." That some are so cannot be denied; but, like many other intrinsically good things, they do not display all their beauties on the surface, nor even upon slight acquaintance. We must intimately know, and be thoroughly familiar with fugues to appreciate their worth or to love them as they deserve to be loved. Hence we advise those of our readers who, hitherto, have feared the fugue, to take heart and carefully, earnestly, and sympathetically study, say, the "Amen" chorus of the *Messiah*, or note how glorious are the entries of the fugue theme at the words "For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" in the "Hallelujah" chorus. Of fugues it may truly be said that they "wear well." We tire of a tune plain and simple; but there is something almost immortal in that tune when it flies[1] from voice-part to voice-part and speaks to us out of a maze of accompanying tunes, as is the case, say with the florid fugue theme, "His yoke is easy," or that short sharp subject, "Let us break their bonds asunder." Upon the differing types of fugued choruses we need not enter here: Handel and Bach have given specimens of all; and the double fugue (or fugue with two subjects) is particularly adaptable to the massiveness of oratorio chorus-work.

The Fugued Chorus

[1] Fugue, from *fugo* = I fly.

Of "free" chorus-writing, although Handel rather favoured the contrapuntal style, the *Messiah* furnishes some interesting examples. Among these, attention might be directed to the "contemplative" chorus, "Surely He hath borne our griefs"; the "dialogue" chorus (usually sung by a single voice to each part), as represented in the opening portion of "Lift up your heads"; the "Choral" chorus, such as "Since by man came death," and the three short choral numbers that follow. The nobility and solemnity of the text treated scarcely gives scope in the *Messiah,* save in a reflective way, for the descriptive and dramatic chorus. For magnificent instances of these the reader is referred to the "Hailstone" and other wonderful choruses in *Israel in Egypt.* It has been truly said that, in his chorus-work, Handel is sublime. We have more than once already spoken of the "Hallelujah" chorus. It may be said to combine both the *rigorous* and *free* style of writing; yet one is so blended with the other that, when listening, we care not to analyse where one begins

Other Types of Chorus

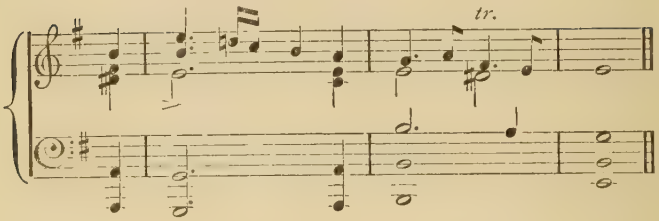


or the other ends. Therein, veritably, we see the master-hand which moulds melody, harmony, and form to work his will and suggest the Divine, the ineffable Mystery of Godliness—even the King of Kings and Lord of Lords—God Himself in His triune Majesty of Father, Son, and Spirit. Here let dogma and rule be obeisant, and let us examine and listen in the spirit of worship and adoration.

So far the vocal forms of oratorio; our readers being reminded, in passing, that oratorio also permits the use of the duet, trio, etc., and that the solo with chorus has been most effectively introduced into their sacred works by many of the great oratorio composers, Gounod's "By Thy love as a Father" (*Redemption*), quoted on page 148, being a case in point. The nature of the orchestral accompaniment, and the growth of the orchestra itself, will be treated of in the chapter of historical recapitulation which follows.

CHAPTER XIV.

Concluding bars of *Messiah* Overture.



THE ORCHESTRA, AND SUMMARY.

The stretched string and vibrating air column—Instruments in concert—An Egyptian band—A "chest of viols"—The Strings, and Wood: flutes, oboes, bassoons, clarinets—The "Brass" family: horn, trumpet, trombones, drums—Handel's scores—The orchestra in Handel's day—Handel's balance of tone and *timbre*—Synopsis of landmarks or epochs in the "Story of Oratorio"—Conclusion.

ERE we pass to a summary of the chief chronological events in the biography of oratorio, it may be best first to resume the thread dropped in the last chapter, and proceed with a historical survey of the orchestra, and instrumental forces generally, used in oratorios of the past and present.

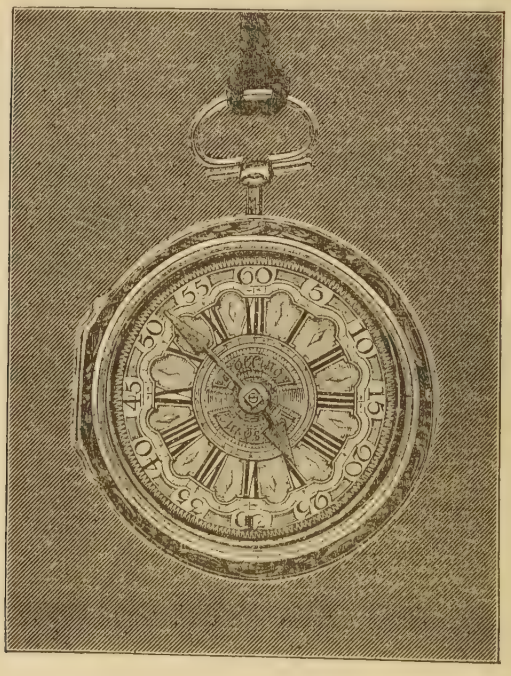
Stretched String and Air Column

As we have previously intimated (Chapter II.), the principle of the sounding (stretched) string and column of air vibrating in a pipe, first "fathered" by Jubal (Gen. iv. 21), served, under the various forms of harps, lyres, flutes, and trumpets, for musical accompaniment to the sacred rites of the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, and Greeks; the Orientals, notably the Chinese, favouring instruments of the rhythmic (or percussion) tribe. David's "instrument of ten strings," as also his "psaltery" and "harp" (Psalms xxxiii. 2), and the "harps" that the Babylonian captives hung on the willows (Psalms cxxxvii. 2), seem to have been cognate with the Grecian lyre and the Bardic smaller (hand) harp. The full-length Egyptian harps (attention to which, as sculptured within the Theban tombs, has been drawn by the travellers and antiquarians Bruce, Denon, and others),[1] and the large Druidical harp of the Kelts, were a variant of the stretched-string means of sound-production on a larger scale. In modern times what wondrous effects have been obtained, in both species of "harp," by extending vibrating fibres and wires over a sounding-board—witness the violin, which sprung from the *vielle* or old fidel (fiddle) of the *trouvères* and troubadours; and the glorious pianoforte of to-day, which is really a recumbent harp enclosed within a resonance case, and

The Stretched String and Vibrating Air Column

[1] For interesting information on Egyptian and Bardic harps, see Bunting's Introduction to *Ancient Irish Music*, and Dr. O'Sullivan's Introduction to O'Curry's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*.

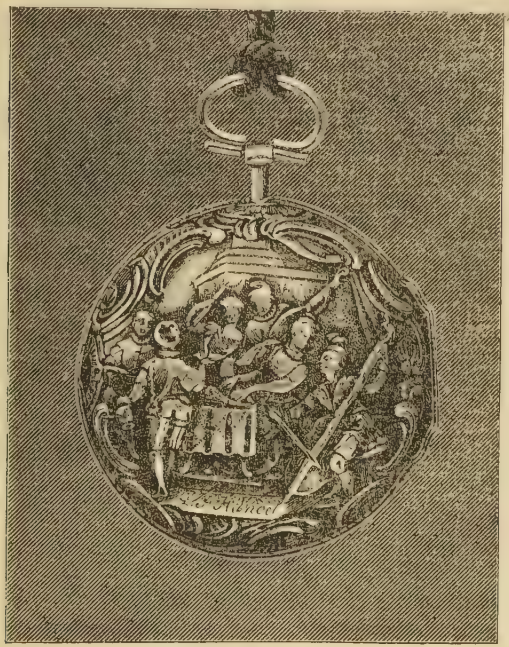
played upon by a system of leverage instead of being plucked directly by the fingers! From the shepherd's reed and the Pandæan pipe to the organ of Ctesibius



HANDEL'S WATCH (FRONT).

the Egyptian (*circa* B.C. 284) was a great step in the utilisation of the sounding tube of air. At first the early Christian fathers strenuously condemned the use

of instrumental music in churches, as savouring of Paganism; but ere long, probably first in Spain, the organ was adapted to the service of the new Faith;



HANDEL'S WATCH (BACK).

and its association with sacred music and church ritual ever since is a fact that needs no comment.

The idea of instruments in concert dates far back

in the history of the world. Chappell, in his *History of Music,* speaks of one Tebhen, an Egyptian nobleman of the fourth dynasty, who maintained a private band and chorus consisting of two harpists, two pipists, one flutist, four male and three female singers, with two conductors, and—strangest of all—a youth, or child, whose province it was to beat time! Nowadays we have changed the order of things, and believe that dignity and age alone can regulate the time-pulse. The Egyptians thought otherwise. "With which of us is the truth?" as said a Bard of other days. The music of the Hebrew Temple service, with its multitudinous array of trumpets, etc., has already been referred to. With the Christian era, undoubtedly the first orchestras were composed of viols, the predecessors of our "family of strings." At the start of the seventeenth century it was customary to speak of a "chest of viols." This meant a set of instruments requisite for a "consort of viols," and consisted generally of six of the viol tribe —*i.e.*, two trebles, two tenors, and two basses. These, with the addition of a harpsichord or organ, and an occasional hautboy or flageolet, supplied the ordinary orchestra of the day.

Instruments in Concert

An Egyptian Band

A Chest of Viols

With the perfection of the violin by the great Cremona makers (Amati, Stradivarius, Guarnerius, etc.) of the seventeenth century, there gradually came about a new order of things. But for a long time we hear of the *viol d'amour,* the *viol da gamba,* etc.; and

Strings and Wood

J. S. Bach never quite lost his early affection for these quaint instruments. To very briefly describe the constitution of the orchestra in his and Handel's day is now our duty; and, in doing this, we must ask the erudite reader's indulgence if, for obvious reasons, only the barest details can here be succinctly referred to. Ere long, the "string quartet" (be it noted that the term *quartet* is somewhat misleading in this connection) took the shape in which we are now familiar with it—*i.e.*, it consisted of first and second violins, violas (or tenor violins), 'cellos, and double basses. The "wood wind" is usually understood to mean the double quartet of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, and two bassoons. Flutes, in

The Strings and Wood

ZINCKE'S MINIATURE OF HANDEL.[1]

[1] Several portraits of Handel are, happily, extant. The Chandos portrait, painted in 1720 by Sir J. Thornhill, showing the composer seated at the harpsichord, is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, where there is another by Grisoni. Zincke's miniature, of which we give an illustration, is the most youthful existing portrait of Handel. At least six presentments by Hudson are scattered over England. Kyte, Denner, Dahl, and others also painted the master.—ED.

varied shapes, have been with us since the earliest historic times. The Oboe (or hautboy—Fr. *hautbois*), though not regularly introduced into the orchestra until 1720, was much favoured by both Bach and Handel. Mention is made in the score of Bach's Passions Musik of two kinds of oboe, the *oboe d'amore* and the *oboe da caccia.* In fact, both Handel and Bach used a much greater number of oboes and bassoons (the natural *bass* instrument of the oboe class), strengthening the treble and bass stringed instruments by these respectively. The Bassoon is said to have been the invention of one Afranio of Ferrara (1540), who is reported to have given it the name (which it still bears in score) of *fagotto,* from its resemblance to a bundle of sticks or fagots. It does not, however, seem to have come into general use in the orchestra until the eighteenth century, it being remembered, nevertheless, that Handel, in his "Witch of Endor" music (*Saul*) and elsewhere, uses it in a manner which infers that its peculiar effects were not unfamiliar to composers and orchestral players of the day. It remained for Haydn and Beethoven to develop the *comic* character of this instrument, which, from the ludicrous grunts that it is capable of producing, has been aptly called the "buffoon" of the orchestra. The beautifully-voiced Clarinet (or clarionet)—which, owing to its powers of ex-

Flutes

Oboes

Bassoons

pression and mixture of reedy and fluty *timbre*, has been called "the female voice of the orchestra"—was not regularly used as an orchestral instrument until Johann Christian Bach (one of J. S. Bach's sons) wrote for a pair of clarinets in his opera *Orione, ossia Diane Vendicate,* first brought out in London in 1763. Since then it has been a special favourite with composers, notably Weber; and Mozart has charmingly utilised a variant of the clarinet, the Basset Horn, in *Nozze di Figaro, Clemenza di Tito, Il Flauto Magico,* and the *Requiem.*

Clarinets

Coming to the "brass" family, to chronicle the history of the "mysterious Horn" would need a chapter to itself, and, if properly told, would read like a fairy tale; for the horn is the seer of the orchestra, and is capable of utterances veiled and sonorous, plaintive and powerful; nor, judging from the performances of most horn players, does the oracle always speak *exactly* in the manner which the composer intended or the player strives to attain. But no matter how the horn speaks, it (or shall we say *he* or *she?*) arrests our attention through a mass of strings, wood, and the other brass instruments, and we think of Berlioz's epithets of "noble and melancholy" as applied to this particular voice, and to these we would venture to add "spiritual and weird." A full description of the Horn, its compass, capabilities, etc.,

The "Brass" Family

The Horn

as of all the other instruments we are now referring to, will be found in Berlioz's, Prout's, or Corder's treatises on the Orchestra; and a specific account of the instrument may be read with advantage in Grove's *Dictionary*. Here we need only state that the French composer Gossec (1733-1829) was associated with its introduction into the orchestra, it having been previously looked upon as an instrument more adapted to the chase.

Trumpet

Of the heroic Trumpet we have already said many things in passing. Holy Writ is replete with mention of this remarkable source of sound production: we find it pre-eminently enters into the ritual of divine worship, and is even an attribute of God Himself—a Voice as awe-inspiring as the thunder, and which, according to prophetic writings, will one day waken the dead. Its use on the battle-field, at pageants and ceremonies of all kinds, and in military music, is familiar to all. In modern orchestral music, the trumpet, with others of the brass family, is much more frequently *en évidence* than was formerly the case—in the days of Bach and Handel, for instance.

Trombone

The Trombone is said to have been first used in the orchestra by Gluck. Perhaps if we stated that it had come into general use as an orchestral instrument about his time (1714-87) we should be nearer the mark. Monteverde, in the score of his opera *Orfeo,* composed a little over a hundred years before Gluck was born, accompanies Pluto by the trombones, the bassoon being relegated

to Orpheus, the organ to Apollo, the viols to Euridice, and the lutes or guitars to Charon. There is nothing new under the sun. Even Wagner, in his hidden orchestra and specific colouring in instrumental accompaniments, had been anticipated in these devices by Italian composers of the Renaissance period that started in 1600 with the production of the first opera and *the first oratorio*. In spite of the assertions of learned theorists then, we venture to suggest that all accounts of definite *first appearances* of certain instruments in the orchestra are liable to contradiction upon further research. We can, at best, intimate that such and such a voice began to be definitely looked upon as a member of "the band" from such and such a date or period. Thus we are safe in saying that the Drums (*tympani*), as other percussion instruments, have been with us always in some shape or other since soldiers first marched *in step* to the battle-field, or the Egyptians first used hand-clapping or practised dancing *in time* to musical measures.

Drums

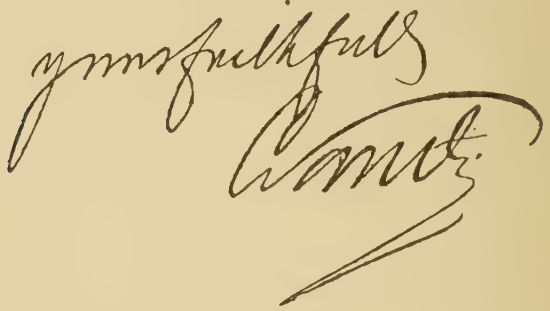
Enough has been said about particular instruments to show the intelligent reader that there is a great difference between Handel's instrumental score and that which he might have written now had he been alive in these days of orchestral blare and thunder. Mozart's "additional" accompaniments to the *Messiah* have been much praised and much blamed. Why cannot sensible critics take a medium course, and say that Mozart, being the genius

Handel's Scores

he was, could do nothing that was not artistic; but that, nevertheless, each great creative mind had best appear in the garb of its own output? Fancy modernising the Greek of Homer, the Italian of Dante, or the English of Chaucer!

When we have Handel, let us, by all means, have Handel *as he was,* and *as he wrote.* This would mean a smaller string band, the bass and treble strings being reinforced by a greater number (than we use nowadays) of bassoons and oboes; flutes would appear chiefly as solo instruments; bass instruments would include trumpets (doubled *ad lib.;* very *high* parts being often

The Orchestra in Handel's Day



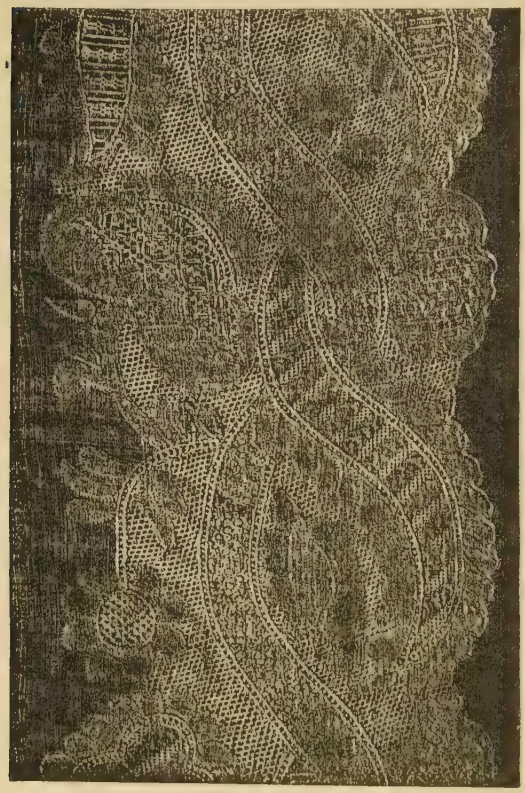
written for these instruments by Handel), horns, trombones (alto, tenor, and bass), and drums; the harp, viola da gamba, and other soft instruments occasionally used for obligato accompaniments; the organ well-nigh omnipresent, the part being repre-

sented in score by figured thorough bass,[1] which could also be utilised for a harpsichord accompaniment. An examination of some of Handel's original scores would well repay the student. His more profuse colouring is reserved for the grand arias, though we find all sorts of orchestral device in choral work; his general aim being, however, the simplicity and grandeur of the organ and basses for massed effects. Trumpets and drums Handel uses most discreetly; and, from his scores in this department, the young student might learn many salutary lessons not often taught in modern concert-halls. The balance and appropriateness of Handel's tone colour are wonderful. He paints rather broad effects than minutiæ of shades. The scoring of "For unto us a child is born" has been described as *magical*. Organ and basses alone are used for the opening portion—that soft, almost whispered reflection upon "the mystery of godliness"—and, like a marvellous burst of exaltation, the full orchestra is reserved for entrance at "Wonderful." Surely in this Handel showed his genius. In the treatment of such a theme, a *gradation* of tone would never convey the requisite astonishment and rapture of adoration. Probably Haydn had this point in mind when he penned the score passage of his *Creation* at the words, "Let there be Light! And there was Light!" For modern additions to the orchestra, and its con-

Handel's Balance of Tone and Timbre

[1] Thorough bass, a term applied to the lower part in old scores, usually figured to imply intended harmonies.

stitution at the present time, the reader is referred to the text-books (mentioned in the bibliography) on the subject.[1]



PIECE OF HANDEL'S RUFFLE.

[1] Although much diversity of opinion obtains on this subject of Mozart's additional accompaniments to the *Messiah* and other Handel scores, it is to be feared there would only be an antiquarian interest in reproducing Handel's scores as he left them in MS. In the absence of the mighty *ad libitum* organ parts with which Handel complemented and supported his orchestra, it is useless to hope for effects which Handel alone obtained. The

Synopsis

As a conclusion, and, it is to be hoped, as an aid to the musical reader who likes to preserve a chain of events in his memory, we now append a synopsis of important "landmarks" or epochs in the progress of oratorio, from its birth in 1600 to the present time:—

SYNOPSIS OF LANDMARKS, OR EPOCHS, IN THE STORY OF ORATORIO.

The First Oratorio, 1600

Performance, in 1600, of *L'Anima ed il Corpo—the first oratorio*—in the church of St. Maria in Vallicella, Rome: music by Emilio del Cavaliere; dramatic sacred text by Laura Guidiccioni.

Early Italian Oratorios, 1650-1750

Early Italian oratorios composed, after the manner of E. del Cavaliere, by Carissimi, 1604-74 (whose recitatives show a distinct advance); Colonna, 1640-95 (who founded a famous School of Music at Bologna); Stradella, 1645-81 (the production of whose *San Giovanni Battista* may be said to have averted the assassin's knife); Scarlatti, 1649-1725 (who did much to perfect the form of the Grand Aria); Caldara, 1678-1763 (whose sacred compositions are of particular merit); etc.

work which Mozart carried out for Baron van Swieten therefore, for performances where no organ was available, must long remain, we think, indisputably the best substitute for the wonderful, unwritten organ parts which Handel took down with him to the grave.—Ed.

Passion Music in Germany, 1600-1700

German "Passion" oratorios composed by Heinrich Schütz, 1585-1672 (Chapel-Master to the Elector, George I.); John Sebastiani (who published a Passions Oratorium in 1672, the year of Schütz's death); and Reinhard Keiser (who produced *Der blutigen und Sterbenden Jesu,* a Passion oratorio, in Hamburg in 1704).

The Passion Oratorios of J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Five sets of Passion oratorios (three only extant, the best known being the "Matthew" Passion) by John Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750. These works were much influenced by the Protestant (Lutheran) Choral, and possibly by the Genevan Psalter of Theodore Beza. J. S. Bach also composed a Christmas Oratorio.

The Oratorios of Handel (1685-1759)

The chain of colossal oratorios composed by George Frederick Handel, 1685-1759, culminating in the *Messiah* (first performed in the Music Hall, Fishamble Street, Dublin, 1742). The following, with a list of dates of composition, are the principal oratorios of Handel:—*Esther* (1732), *Deborah* (1733), *Athalia* (1733), *Alexander's Feast* (1736), *Israel in Egypt* (1738), *Saul* (1738), *Messiah* (begun 22nd August 1741, and completed 14th September of the same year), *Samson* (1743), *Joseph* (1743), *Hercules* (1744), *Belshazzar* (1744), *The Occasional Oratorio* (1746), *Judas Maccabæus* (1746), *Alexander Balus* (1747), *Joshua* (1747), *Susanna* (1748), *Solomon* (1748), *Theodora* (1749), *The Choice of Hercules* (1750), *Jephtha* (1751), *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757).

Oratorios after Handel

Oratorios of importance after Handel were the *Creation* and the *Seasons,* by Joseph Haydn (1732-1809); the *Mount of Olives,* by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827); the *Last Judgment, Crucifixion,* and *Fall of Babylon,* by Ludwig Spohr (1784-1859); *Lazarus* (unfinished), by Franz Schubert (1797-1828); *St. Paul* and *Elijah,* by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47); *Paradise and the Peri*, by Robert Schumann (1810-56); *Redemption* and *Mors et Vita,* by Charles Gounod (1818-93).

Great Oratorios after Handel, Nineteenth Century

Oratorios, subsequent to Handel, were also composed (*a*) in England by Arne, Arnold, Greene, etc.; (*b*) in Italy, by Cimarosa, Jomelli, Guglielmi, Paisiello, etc.; and (*c*) in Germany, by Graun, P. E. Bach (son of J. S. Bach), Homilius, Klein, Naumann, Schneider, etc. None of these attained any lasting fame.

Lesser Oratorio Composers after Handel, Eighteenth Century

Foremost representatives of the English school of oratorio-composers of the nineteenth century were Sir George A. Macfarren (1813-87), Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1816-75), and Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1901).

English Oratorio Composers of Nineteenth Century

The British school of composition (in the higher branches of the art) is eminently represented by Sir J. Frederick Bridge, Dr. Frederic Cowen, Dr. Edward Elgar, Sir Alexander C. Mackenzie, Sir H. Hubert Parry, and Dr. C. Villiers Stanford.

Living English Composers of Oratorios, Nineteenth Century

From these, and others, we naturally hope for the first-fruits of a great Renaissance that will contain in its harvest even one great English oratorio worthy of claiming, with no uncertain voice, the affection and reverence of the English-speaking race as Handel's *Messiah* has already so universally done.

Conclusion

It has been said by some that Oratorio, as far as fresh production goes, is now *dead*. Let us take a brighter view of affairs and believe that it is only *moribund*, and that, like "the corn of wheat," it is destined to spring into new life and vigour at no distant date. Probably the chrysalis will develop into some new form of beauty and splendour hitherto undreamed of. The signs of the times are significant. The Passion Plays of Ober-Ammergau still attract enthralled crowds every ten years to the mountains of Bavaria. In such stage-representations as *The Sign of the Cross, Quo Vadis,* and *Ben Hur,* we cannot fail to see a tendency to the revival of *Sacred Drama*. The possibilities of Grand Opera are probably still unrealised, the most stupendous subjects in legend and history having not as yet received adequate literary, scenic, or musical treatment. In how far Oratorio will lend itself to a more realistic (dramatised) method of interpretation remains to be seen. The world is now waiting for a great sacred *dramma per musica* which shall add another landmark to the onward march of Musical Progress.

Appendices.

A. List of Principal Oratorio Composers and their Works.

B. First Performances of Important Oratorios.

C. Suggested Sources from which to form a Bibliography of Oratorio.

Appendix A.

List of Principal Oratorio Composers and their Works.*

(From 1600 to the present time.)

Armes, Philip (Mus. Doc., M.A., etc.).—"Hezekiah," "St. John the Evangelist," "St. Barnabas."

Arne, Thomas A. (Mus. Doc.), 1710-78.—"Abel," "Judith."

Arnold, Samuel (Mus. Doc.), 1740-1802.—"The Cure of Saul," "Abimelech," "Resurrection," "Prodigal Son."

Atterbury, Luffman, d. 1796.—"Goliah" (1773).

Bach, Philipp E., 1714-88.—"Die Israeliten in der Wüste" (The Israelites in the Desert), "Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu" (The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus).

Bach, John S., 1685-1750.—"Passion" Oratorios (five sets in all—three extant), "Christmas" oratorio.

Barnby, Joseph (Knt.), 1838-96.—"Rebekah."

Barnett, John F., 1837.—"The Raising of Lazarus."

Beethoven, Ludwig, 1770-1827.—"The Mount of Olives."

Benedict, Julius (Knt.), 1804-85.—"St. Cecilia," "St. Peter."

Bennett, William S. (Mus. Doc., M.A., Knt.), 1816-75.—"The Woman of Samaria."

Bexfield, William R. (Mus. Doc.), 1824-53.—"Israel Restored."

Bridge, Frederick J. (Mus. Doc., Knt.)—"Mount Moriah," "Nineveh," etc.

* Oratorios in chronological order.

Caldara, Antonio, 1678-1763.—"Tobia," "Assalone," "Giuseppe, etc.

Carissimi, Giacomo, 1604(?)-74.—"La Plainte des Damnés," "Histoire de Job," "Ezéchias," "Baltazar," "David e Jonathas," "Abraham et Isaac," "Jephthe," "Le Jugemen Dernier," "Le Mauvais Riche," "Jonas."

Cavaliere, Emilio del, 1550.—"La Rappresentazione dell' Anim ed il Corpo," 1600. (The *first* oratorio.)

Chipp, Edmund T. (Mus. Doc.), 1823-86.—"Job," "Naomi."

Cimarosa, Domenico, 1749-1801.—"Il Sacrificio d'Abramo," et

Clarke-Whitfield, John (Mus. Doc.), 1770-1835.—"The Cruci fixion and the Resurrection."

Colonna, Giovanni P., 1640-95.

Costa, Michael (Knt.), 1810-84.—"Eli," "Naaman."

Coward, Henry (Mus. Doc.).—"The Story of Bethany."

Cowen, Frederic H. (Mus. Doc.).—"St. Ursula," "Ruth."

Crotch, William (Mus. Doc.), 1775-1847.—"Palestine," "Th Captivity of Judah."

D'Allessandi, Giulio.—"Santa Francesca Romana" (1690).

Elgar, Edward (Mus. Doc.).—"The Light of Life" (Lu Christi).

Federici, Francesco.—"Santa Christina," "Santa Caterin de Siena" (1676).

Fux, Johann, J., 1660-1741 (said to have written ten Lente oratorios).

Giardini, Felice de, 1716-96.—"Ruth."

Gounod, Charles F., 1818-93.—"The Redemption," "Mors Vita."

Graun, Karl H., 1701-59.—"Der Tod Jesu."

Greene, Maurice (Mus. Doc.), 1696-1755.—"Jephthah," "Th Force of Truth."

Guglielmi, Pietro, 1727-1804.—"Debora," "Sisera."

Handel, George F., 1685-1759.—"Il Trionfo del Tempo," "I Resurrezione" (*Italian* oratorios); "Esther," "Deborah "Athalia," "Saul," "Israel," "Messiah," "Samson

"Joseph," "Hercules," "Belshazzar," "Occasional," "Judas Maccabæus," "Alexander Balus," "Joshua," "Solomon," "Suzanna," "Theodora," "Jephtha," "Triumph of Time and Truth" (*English* oratorios).

Hasse, Johann A., 1699-1783.—"Die Pilgrimme auf Golgatha."

Haydn, Franz J., 1732-1809.—"Il Ritorno di Tobia," "Creation," "Seasons."

Homilius, Gottfried A., 1714-85.—"Die Freude der Hirten über die Geburt Jesu."

Iliffe, Frederick (Mus. Doc.).—"St. John the Divine."

Jenkins, David (Mus. Bac.).—"David and Saul," "The Legend of St. David."

Jommelli, Nicolo, 1714-74.—"Passion" oratorio.

Keiser, Reinhard, 1673-1739.—"Der für die Sünde der Welt" (Who for the sins of the world), "Der verurtheilte und gekreuzigte Jesus" (The condemned and crucified Jesus), "Passions" oratorio, etc.

King, Matthew P., 1773-1823.—"The Intercession."

Klein, Bernhard, 1793-1832.—"Job," "Jephthah," "David."

Leo, Leonardo, 1694-1746.—"Santa Elena al Calvario."

Liszt, Franz, 1811-86.—"Christus," "St. Elizabeth," "Stanislaus."

Loewe, Johann C. G., 1796-1869.—"Die Festzeiten" (The Festivals), "Die Zerstörung Jerusalems" (The storming of Jerusalem), "Die Sieben Schläfer" (The Seven Sleepers), etc.

Löhr, Harvey.—"The Queen of Sheba."

Loreto, Vittoria.—"St. Ignatius Loyola" (1622), etc.

Macfarren, George A. (Mus. Doc., Knt.), 1813-87.—"St. John the Baptist," "The Resurrection," "Joseph," "King David."

Mackenzie, Alexander C. (Mus. Doc., Knt.).—"The Rose of Sharon."

Mattheson, Johann, 1681-1764.—"Das Heilsame Gebet"—Passion (The healing prayer).

Mazzocchi, Domenico.—"Querimonia di S. Maria Madde
lena," etc.
Mendelssohn, Felix, 1809-47.—"St. Paul," "Elijah," "Christus
(unfinished).
Molique, Bernhard, 1803-69.—"Abraham."
Mozart, Wolfgang A., 1756-91.—"La Betulia liberata," "David
de penitente" (between a sacred cantata and an oratorio).

Naumann, Johann G., 1741-1801.—"David in Terebinto."
Neukomm, Sigismund (Chevalier), 1778-1858.—"Mount Sinai,
"David," etc.

Ouseley, Frederick A. G. (Mus. Doc., Knt.), 1825-89—"S
Polycarp," "Hagar."

Paine, John K.—"St. Peter."
Paisiello, Giovanni, 1741-1816.—"Jonathas."
Pallavicini, Carola.—"Il Trionfo della Castità" (1689).
Parry, Charles H. H. (Mus. Doc., Knt.).—"Judith," "Job,
"King Saul."
Parry, Joseph (Mus. Doc.).—"Saul of Tarsus," "Emmanuel."
Piccini, Niccola, 1728-1800.—"Jonathan."
Pistocchi, Fr. A.—"S. Maria Vergine" (1698).
Porpora, Niccola, 1686-1767.—"La Martiria di Santa Eugenia
Postel.—"Passion" (1704).

Rheinthaler.—"Jephtha."
Rolle, Johann H., 1718-85.—"Saul," "Samson," "Abraha
on Moriah," "The Death of Abel," etc.
Rossi, Luigi, *circa* 1620.—"Il Lamento di S. Maria Vergine
1627; "Guiseppe, Figlio di Giacobbe" (described as
"spiritual opera").
Rossini, Gioacchino A., 1792-1868.—"Ciro in Babilonia."
Rubinstein, Anton, 1829-94.—"The Tower of Babel," "Par
dise Lost," "Moses." (Entitled *sacred operas* by th
composer.)

Sacchini, Antonio M. G., 1734-86.—"Esther," "San Filippo," et

Appendix A

Salieri,[1] Antonio, 1750-1825.—"La Passione di Gesù Cristo," etc.

Scarlatti, Alessandro, 1659-1725.—"Dolori di Maria," "Sacrifizio d'Abramo," etc.

Schicht, Johann G., 1753-1823.

Schneider, Friedrich J. C. (Mus. Doc.), 1786-1853.—"Die Höllenfahrt des Messias" (The descent of the Messiah into Hell), "Das Weltgericht" (The Judgment of the World), etc.

Schubert, Franz P., 1797-1828.—"Lazarus" (fragment), "Miriam's Siegesgesang."

Schumann, Robert A., 1810-56.—"Paradise and the Peri" (a so-called *profane* oratorio).

Schütz, Heinrich, 1585-1672.—"Resurrection" and "Passion" oratorios.

Sebastiani, Johann.—"Passion" oratorio (1672).

Silas, Edouard, 1827-1901.—"Joash."

Spohr, Louis, 1784-1859.—"The Last Judgment," "Calvary," "The Fall of Babylon."

Stainer, John, 1840-1901 (Mus. Doc., M.A., Knt.).—"The Crucifixion."

Stanford, Charles V. (Mus. Doc.).—"The Three Holy Children," "Eden," etc.

Stanley, John (Mus. Bac.), 1713-86.—"Jephthah," "Zimri," "The Fall of Egypt."

Stradella, Alessandro (17th century).—"S. Giovanni Battista" (*circa* 1676).

Sullivan, Arthur S. (Mus. Doc., Knt.), 1842-1901.—"The Prodigal Son," "The Light of the World," "The Martyr of Antioch" (a cantata-oratorio).

Worgan, John (Mus. Doc.), 1724-90.—"Hannah," "Manasseh."

Zingarelli, Niccolo A., 1752-1837.—"The Passion," "The Flight into Egypt," etc.

[1] Salieri also wrote a sacred cantata, "Le Dernier Jugement." Concerning this, the composer consulted Gluck as to whether it would be advisable to assign the part of Christ to a high tenor. Gluck replied, half jokingly, "Before long I will send you word from the other world in what key Our Saviour speaks." In four days Gluck was no more.

Appendix B.

First Performances of Important Oratorios.*

Date.	Name of Oratorio.	Composer.	Place of First Performance.
1600 (Feb.)	"La Rappresentazione dell' Anima ed il Corpo"	Emilio del Cavaliere	Church of St. Mari Vallicella, Rom
1623	"Die Auferstehung Christi"	Heinrich Schütz	Dresden
1631	"Il Martiro di SS. Abbundio ed Abbundanzio"	Domenico Mazzocchi	Rome
1672	"Passions Musik"	Johann Sebastiani	Königsberg
circa 1676	"San Giovanni Battista"	Alessandro Stradella	Church of St. Jo Lateran
1693	"I Dolori di Maria Sempre Vergine"	Alessandra Scarlatti	Rome

* By "important," we infer those works still frequently perform or of antiquarian interest as landmarks in the progress of orato For obvious reasons the works of living composers are not he catalogued.

Appendix B

Date.	Name of Oratorio.	Composer.	Place of First Performance.
1704	"Passions Dichtung des blutigen und sterbenden Jesu"	Reinherd Keiser	Hamburg
1708	"La Resurrezione"	George F. Handel	(Composed at) Palace of Marchese di Ruspoli, Rome
1720 (Aug. 29)	"Esther"	G. F. Handel	Canons, London
1720	"Die Johannis-Passion"	Johann S. Bach	(Composed at) Leipzig
1729 (Good Friday)	"Die Grosse Passion nach Mätthaus"	J. S. Bach	Leipzig
1739 (Apr. 4)	"Israel in Egypt"	G. F. Handel	London
1742 (April 13)	"Messiah"	G. F. Handel	Dublin
1743 (Feb. 18)	"Samson"	G. F. Handel	London
1747 (Apr. 1)	"Judas Maccabæus"	G. F. Handel	London
1750 (March 15)	"Theodora" (Handel's favourite)	G. F. Handel	London

Story of Oratorio

Date.	Name of Oratorio.	Composer.	Place of First Performance.
1752 (Feb. 26)	"Jephtha" (the last)	G. F. Handel	London
1755	"Der Tod Jesu"	K. H. Graun	Berlin
1764 (Feb. 29)	"Judith"	Dr. T. A. Arne	London
1798 (April 29)	"Creation"	Joseph Haydn	Vienna
1801 (April 24)	"Seasons"	J. Haydn	Vienna
1803 (Apr. 5)	"Mount of Olives"	Ludwig van Beethoven	Vienna
1819	"Das Weltgericht"	F. Schneider	Leipzig
1826	"The Last Judgment"	Louis Spohr	Cassel
1836 (May 22)	"St. Paul"	Felix Mendelssohn	Düsseldorf (*in English* at Liverpool Oct. 3, 1836)
1843 (Dec. 2)	"Paradise and the Peri"	Robert Schumann	Leipzig
1846 (Aug. 26)	"Elijah"	F. Mendelssohn	Birmingham
1855	"Eli"	Sir Michael Costa	Birmingham

Appendix B

Date.	Name of Oratorio.	Composer.	Place of First Performance.
1869	"Prodigal Son"	Sir Arthur Sullivan	Worcester
1873	"Light of the World"	Sir A. Sullivan	Birmingham
1873 (Oct. 23)	"St. John the Baptist"	Sir George A. Macfarren	Bristol
1867	"Woman of Samaria"	Sir William Sterndale Bennett	Birmingham
1880	"Martyr of Antioch"	Sir A. Sullivan	Leeds
1882	"Redemption"	Charles Gounod	Birmingham
1885	"Mors et Vita"	C. Gounod	Birmingham

Appendix C.

Suggested Sources from which to form a Bibliography of Oratorio.

(a) Separate works on *Oratorio* are few, and are, for the most part, in German. Among these can be recommended C. H. Bitter's *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Oratoriums*, F. Chrysander's *Ueber das Oratorium*, Otto Wangemann's *Geschichte des Oratoriums*, and G. P. Upton's *The Standard Oratorios*. In this connection serial articles in the musical magazines, such as Mr. Joseph Bennett's articles in *Musical Times*, or the Rev. J. T. Lawrence's "Notes on the Oratorios" *(Musical Opinion)*, may be read with interest and advantage.

(b) Special articles on *Oratorio* will be found in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (see the admirable historical and critical treatment of the subject therein by W. S. Rockstro); Mendel and Reissmann's *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon;* W. S. B. Matthews' *A Hundred Years' Music;* Ritter's *Music in America*, etc.

(c) Historical and critical references to *Oratorio* occur with frequency in the histories and miscellaneous musical writings (English) of Bennett, Butterworth, Burney, Chappell, Crowest, Davey, Fuller-Maitland, Haweis, Hawkins, Hogarth, Hullah, Macfarren (G. A.), Naumann, Riemann, Ritter, Rockstro, Rowbotham, Runciman, Shedlock, Williams (C. F. A.), etc.

[The contributions to musical literature of these authors can be traced under their respective names in the British Museum Library Catalogue.]

Appendix C

(d) Apart from musical periodicals, a great many admirable magazine articles, touching directly or indirectly upon the subject of *Oratorio*, may be consulted with advantage. Among these, specific reference may be made to "The First Oratorio," by J. F. Rowbotham *(Chambers's Journal);* "Oratorio and Drama," by the Rev. H. R. Haweis *(Harper's);* as also to "Musical Conductors of the Day," by Joseph Bennett *(English Illustrated Magazine);* "Oratorio of the *Messiah* at Exeter Hall" *(Dublin Review);* "Handel and his Portraits," by R. A. M. Stevenson *(Magazine of Art);* "Haendel, G. F.," by E. MacMahon *(Belgravia);* "Handel," by F. J. Crowest *(Blackwood, Social England)*, etc.

(e) Biographies of the great *Oratorio* composers are to be recommended for perusal: see "Master Musicians" series; as also such works as the Mendelssohn Reminiscences and Letters, Banister's *G. A. Macfarren*, Finks' *Life of Handel*, the similar theme as treated by W. S. Rockstro, Spitta's *Life of J. S. Bach*, etc.

(f) Miscellaneous works that will be read with interest in connection with the *Story of Oratorio* are :—

Great Tone Poets (F. J. Crowest).
Great Musical Composers (G. T. Ferris).
Ueber Mendelssohn's "Paulus" (Otto Jahn).
Der Choral Gesang zur Zeit der Reformation (P. Mortimer).
J. S. Bach's Mätthaus-passion (Mosewius).
The Ancient Cornish Drama (edited by Edwin Norris).
English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes (A. W. Pollard).
Music of the Bible (Sir John Stainer).
Account of the Visit of Handel to Dublin (Townsend).
Le Grand "Mystère de Jesus"; Breton Drame du Moyen Age (Hersart de la Villemarque).
Ueber Choral und Kirchengesänge (G. J. Vogler).
Music and Morals (H. R. Haweis).

(g) Among students' text-books, to aid in understanding the construction and accompaniment of *Oratorio*, the following are recommended :—

Harmony. Treatises by Stainer, Prout, etc. See also *Music* (Banister), and *Students' Harmony* (Mansfield).

Counterpoint. Bridge (Novello primer), Cherubini, etc.

Form. Pauer (Novello primer), Prout (Angener & Co.), etc.

Organ. Rimbault & Hopkins, Thomas Elliston, etc.

Orchestra. Berlioz, Prout, Corder, etc.

See also the excellent articles on these subjects in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

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